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# CLIFF BURTON

## THE TONES, TECHNIQUE, AND ATTITUDE THAT DROVE METALLICA

*"I still feel the spirit of Cliff. He was up there with Jaco."*
ROBERT TRUJILLO

THE GO-GOS
**KATHY VALENTINE**
Back from the brink

JOURNEY
**RANDY JACKSON**
"*American Idol* was a marketing tool!"

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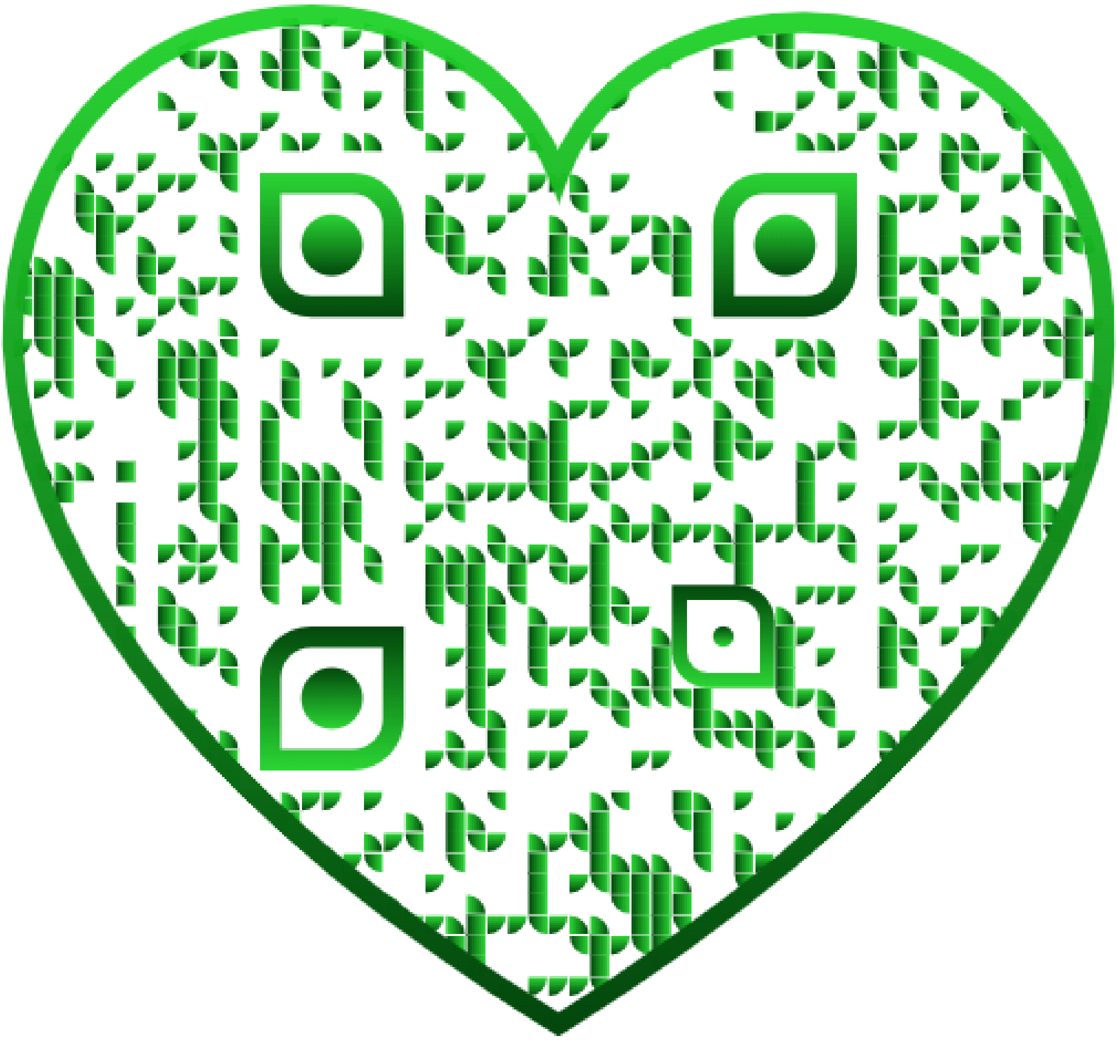
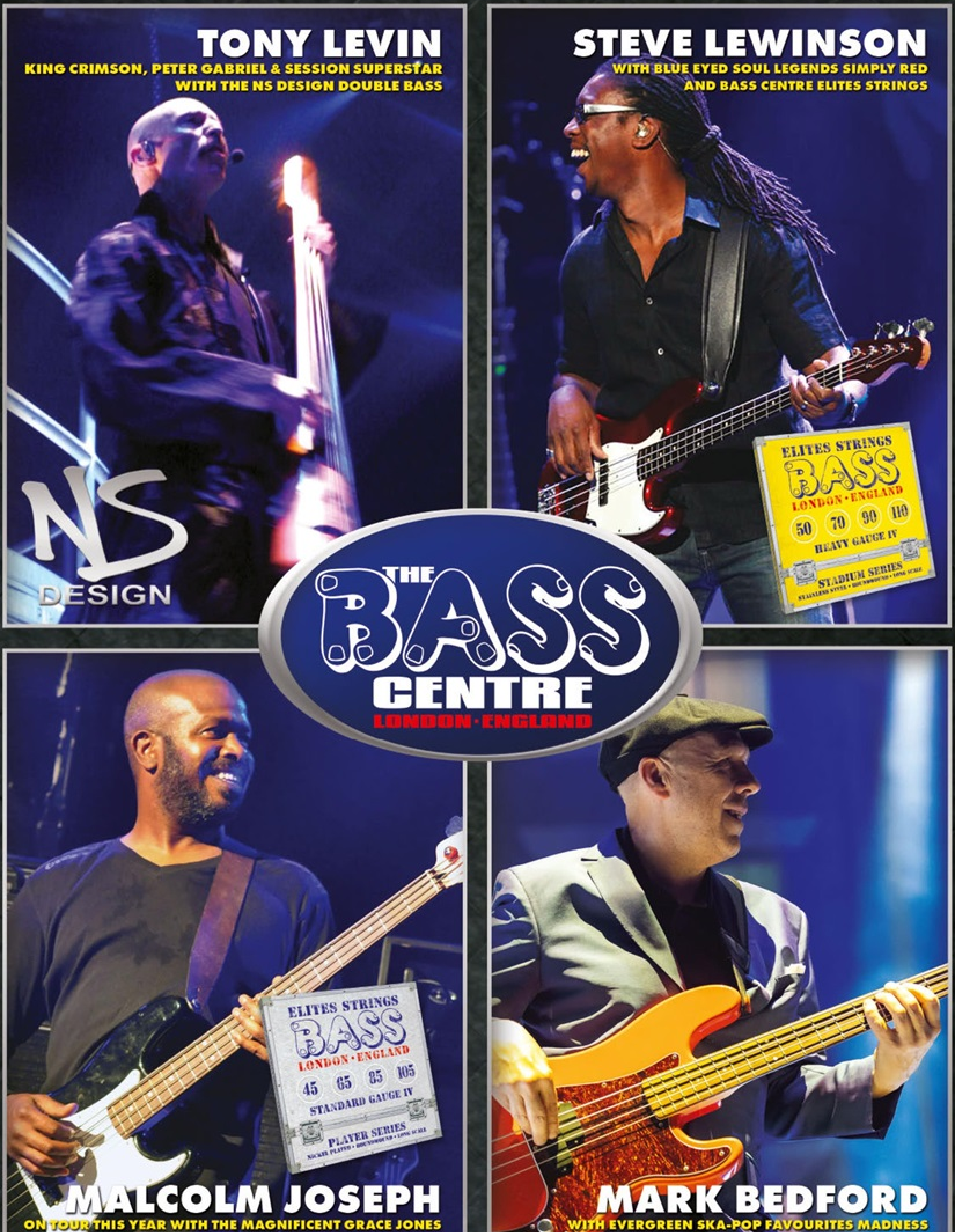
FUTURE



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21466 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Black Cherry
16156 - Cort Action PJ OPB, Open Pore Black
15379 - Cort B4 Plus Artisan 4-Strings Bass
23039 - Cort GB24JJ Trans Black
23038 - Cort GB24JJ Sunburst
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21578 - Fender 60th Road Worn Jazz Bass, Sunburst
21756 - Fender 60th Anniv RW J Bass, F.Silver
22007 - Fender 60th Road Worn Jazz Bass, O.White
22370 - Fender 75th Anniv. Jazz Bass, Diamond
22368 - Fender 75th Anniv Precision Bass Diamond
19643 - Fender Am Orig. 70s Jazz, Vintage White
18485 - Fender Am. Performer P. Bass Sunburst
22352 - Fender American Professional II Jazz, Blue
21789 - Fender Am Pro II Jazz Bass, Roasted Pine
22615 - Fender Am Pro II Precision Bass Sunburst
21751 - Fender Am Pro II P. Bass, Dark Night
8927 - Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass in Sunburst
23497 - Fender MIJ P Bass, Secondhand, 1987-88
22618 - Fender MIJ 50s Precision Bass
23086 - Fender Player Jazz Bass Fretless S.burst
23323 - Fender Player Jazz Bass Polar Black Left
23272 - Fender Player Jazz Bass Polar White
21660 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Sunburst
19195 - Fender Player Jazz Bass, Capri Orange
22014 - Fender Player Mustang Bass PJ Aged Nat
22818 - Fender Player Plus Jazz Bass Belair Blue
23360 - Fender Player Plus Jazz Bass Oly. Pearl
22817 - Fender Player Plus P-Bass, Cosmic Jade
23322 - Fender Player P. Bass LH Sunburst
19473 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Sunburst
19314 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Black
21744 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Black, PF
19474 - Fender Player Precision Bass Buttercream
23286 - Fender Player Precision Bass Black Lefty
21755 - Fender Player Precision Bass, Sunburst
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22836 - Fender Vintera 60s Jazz Bass Daphne Blue
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23518 - Hofner HCT Shorty Violin Bass
19420 - Hofner HCT Violin Bass, Sunburst
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18077 - Rickenbacker 4003S Bass Guitar Mapleglo
18078 - Rickenbacker 4003S Bass, JetGlo
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23242 - Squier Affinity P Bass Charcoal FrostMet
22897 - Squier Affinity PJ Bass Lake Placid Blue
16680 - Squier Affinity P Bass PJ Pack, Black
16151 - Squier Bronco Bass, Torino Red
18933 - Squier C. Vibe 60s Jazz Bass Fretless
21274 - Squier Classic Vibe '70s Jazz Bass, Nat
23163 - Squier Classic Vibe 50s P Bass, W Blonde
23364 - Squier CV 60s P. Bass, 3-Colour Sunburst
21604 - Squier Classic Vibe 70s P. Bass, Walnut
22863 - Squier CV 50s Precision Bass Sunburst
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23340 - Squier Contemporary Jazz Bass, DMR
22885 - Squier FSR CV Late 50s P Bass, W. Blonde
23367 - Squier Mini Precision Bass, Black
23363 - Squier Mini Precision Bass, Dakota Red
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22775 - Traveler Guitars TB4P Bass
22779 - Traveler Guitars Ultra-Light Bass
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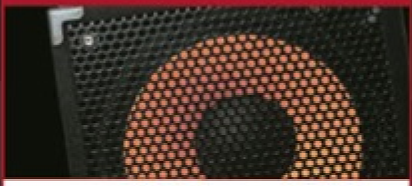
14407 - Vintage LVJ74 Lefthanded Bass, Natural
23445 - Yamaha BB434M Black
23458 - Yamaha BB734A Bass, Dark Coffee Sunburst
23508 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass Factory Blue Finish

## Bass Cabinets



13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet
16800 - BLUGuitar Nanocab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package

**EICH AMPLIFICATION**

16054 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16055 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16042 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohms
16041 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohms
16075 - Eich 115L Bass Cabinet
16052 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16053 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16040 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16071 - Eich 210M Bass Cabinet
16069 - Eich 212L Bass Cabinet
16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
16048 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16068 - Eich 410L Bass Cabinet
16067 - Eich 610L Bass Cabinet
16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
16065 - Eich 810L Bass Cabinet
16321 - Gallien Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet

**Mark bass**

5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
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16014 - Markbass CMD Super Combo K1 A.Caron
17732 - Markbass Marcus Miller Cab 102
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab

**ORANGE**

6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)
23026 - Phil Jones Bass C4 Compact Bass Cab
21040 - D'Addario Planet Waves 5ft Speaker Lead
20753 - Stagg 10M Speak-Jack Lead (SSP10SP15)
20754 - Stagg 10M Spk-Spk Lead (SSP10SS15)

**TRACE ELLIOT**

16856 - Trace Elliot 1x10 Elf Cab
19686 - Trace Elliot TE28E 2x8 bass cabinet

## Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)
23344 - Ampeg BA115 Combo, Secondhand
21842 - Ashdown Studio 12
22943 - Ashdown Studio 15 Bass Amp Combo
22731 - Ashdown Ashdown Studio Jnr
23314 - Boss Katana 110 Bass Amp Combo
23313 - Boss Katana 210 Bass
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package

**EICH AMPLIFICATION**

16046 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
19163 - Eich BC112 PRO Bass Combo
16028 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo

**Fender**

13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
18724 - Fender Rumble LT25 Bass Combo Amp

**GK GALLIEN-KRUEGER**

23058 - Gallien K. BL115 Backline 115, Used
16765 - Gallien Krueger MB110 Bass Combo

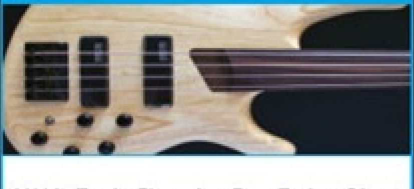
**Mark bass**

23515 - Mark Bass CMD102P IV Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin 300W
5429 - Mark Bass Covers For Mark Bass Amps
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W, 1x12)
18371 - Markbass M. Miller CMD101 Micro60
18372 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 250
18370 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 500
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
9939 - Markbass MiniMark 802 Bass Combo
16764 - Markbass 102 250 Richard Bona Combo
19729 - Markbass Ninja 102-500 Bass Combo
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

**ORANGE**

15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Combo
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Combo
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Combo
23007 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Glenn Hughes
22889 - Phil Jones BG400 Suitcase Compact

## Fretless Basses



23086 - Fender Player Jazz Bass Fretless S.burst
14867 - Magic Fluke Timber Electric Bass
18933 - Squier C. Vibe 60s Jazz Bass Fretless
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MRJP, Sunburst

## Bass Heads

14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
22741 - Ashdown ABM-300-EVO IV Head, Bass Amp
18850 - Bergantino Forte Bass Amplifier
21556 - Bergantino NXT210 Bass Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16044 - Eich T1000 Bass Amp
16043 - Eich T300 Bass Amp
16027 - Eich T500 Bass Amp
16026 - Eich T900 Bass Amp
16319 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Fusion Bass Head

**Mark bass**

14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
23164 - MarkBass Little Mark IV Bass Amp Head
23326 - MarkBass Little Mark Vintage D2 Head
23541 - Mark Bass Nano Mark II Bass Amp Head
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
19484 - Markbass Evo 1 Bass Amp Head
17254 - Markbass Little Marcus 1000 Bass Amp
17252 - Markbass Little Marcus 250 Bass Amp Head
17009 - Markbass Little Marcus 500 Bass Amp Head
17010 - Markbass Little Marcus 800 Bass Amp Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
19282 - Markbass Little Mark Vintage Bass Amp Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head

**ORANGE**

6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
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22538 - Cort A5 Beyond Open Pore Bubinga Natural
23281 - Cort Action Bass V Plus 5-String, Black
16526 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Black
23461 - Fender PlayerPlus Jazz Bass V 3-C Sburst
16766 - Ibanez SR30TH5PII Premium, 5-String Bass
23277 - MTD Kingston Z 5-String Trans Red Used
19381 - Marleaux MBass 5 String Bass, Burl Top
23068 - Overwater Custom 5 String Bass, Red

**Rickenbacker**

21654 - Rickenbacker 4003S 5 Bass Guitar Jetglo
21655 - Rickenbacker 4003S 5 String Bass Mapleglo
23090 - Sandberg California II VM 5 String, Marley Blue
19775 - Shine 5 String Bass, Trans Blue, Used

**Spector**

19735 - Spector Bass Rebop 5DLX Blck Cherry
11196 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Classic Blk Cherry
22523 - Spector Bass Leg 5 Cl Blk Cherry Lefty
23166 - Spector Legend 5 Neck-Thru Bass, Walnut Stain
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
23278 - Squier Precision 5-String Sunburst, Used
19158 - Sterling by MusicMan SubRay 5 Bass, HBS
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
4889 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Natural

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

# WELCOME

## Some bass players leave us too soon. That doesn't mean we stop listening.

When I was 17 in 1988, I bought my first bass guitar, a $50 Fender Precision copy. It was terrible, and my rudimentary playing was even worse, but in my head, of course, I sounded exactly like Paul McCartney, John Taylor, Geezer Butler and most of all, Cliff Burton, who had died just a couple of years before.

As a teenage Metallica fan, I was intrigued by the unexpectedly melodic nature of Cliff's playing. Nowadays we know that this was the result of his study of Geddy Lee, Steve Harris and Johann Sebastian Bach, but back then, all I knew was that he was playing great-sounding lines and fills, often through a barrage of distortion. I gave it my best shot, and several decades later I should really thank my long-suffering parents for putting up with it.

Here we are in 2022, and Cliff's legacy is – if anything – stronger than ever. Long-time disciples like me have never forgotten the wizardry of his bass playing, or the bitter injustice of his early death for that matter, which makes it all the more fulfilling to be able to celebrate him on the cover of *BP*, literally the best magazine on the planet for that purpose.

We also meet Kathy Valentine of the Go-Go's, Rick Savage of Def Leppard and Randy Jackson of Journey, one of the best-known bassists in the world thanks to his tenure on *American Idol*. We look back at a legendary interview with Jack Bruce, we test bass gear from Gibson, Gallien-Krueger and Luna Guitars, and we provide you with the best bass education on the planet. I think you're going to enjoy it.

See you next month!
**Joel McIver, Editor**

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© Getty (Burton) J. Strauss/FilmMagics/Getty (Valentine), Chris Polk/FilmMagic (Savage), Raphael Meert (Kerns), Paul Bergen/Redferns/Getty (Bruce), Colin Oliver (Bassista), Keith Birmingham/Getty (Jackson)

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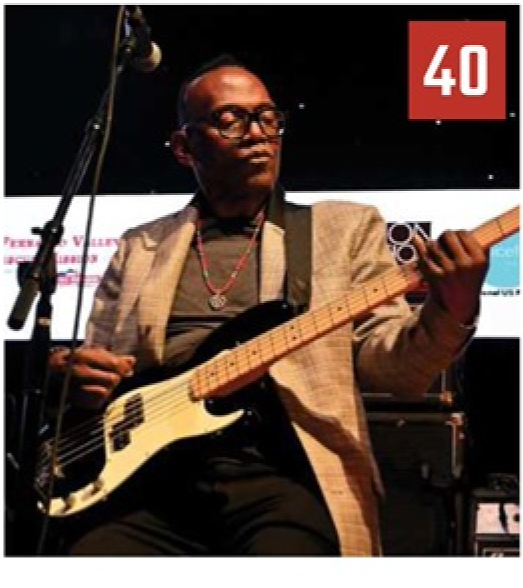
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# BASS PHIL

## Thin Lizzy's late frontman Phil Lynott is celebrated with a new music and film release.

Thirty-six years and counting since the premature death of Thin Lizzy's singer and bassist Phil Lynott, his profile has steadily risen to the status of icon. These days, music historians place him squarely at the heart of a rock'n'roll epoch that is unlikely to return, which may explain the appeal of releases such as the forthcoming *Phil Lynott: Songs For While I'm Away + Thin Lizzy: The Boys Are Back In Town: Live at The Sydney Opera House October 1978* package, no doubt this year's longest-titled rock release.

As you've probably figured out, the new collection pairs the former Lynott movie documentary with an acclaimed in-concert film, and is available as a double DVD plus CD (remember them?) or Blu-ray equivalent. Archive footage, solo and full-band music and interviews with the late rocker are complemented by new interviews with sometime Lizzy members Midge Ure, Darren Wharton and Scott Gorham, Adam Clayton of U2, Huey Lewis, Metallica's James Hetfield, Phil's wife and daughters, and many others.

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© Paul Natkin/Getty Images

# RIP Alec John Such

Alec John Such, a founding member and former bass player with Bon Jovi, passed away on June 5 at the age of 70. The news was confirmed via a statement posted to Bon Jovi's official Twitter account. "We are heartbroken to hear the news of the passing of our dear friend Alec John Such," the statement said. "He was an original. As a founding member of Bon Jovi, Alec was integral to the formation of the band. To be honest, we found our way to each other through him. He was a childhood friend of Tico [Torres, drummer] and brought Richie [Sambora, former guitarist] to see us perform. Alec was always wild and full of life… We'll miss him dearly."

Born in 1952 in Yonkers, New York, Such was an influential force behind the formation of Bon Jovi. Having honed his craft in a band called The Message, Such would later receive a call from an early Bon Jovi line-up – then comprising only Jon Bon Jovi and keyboardist David Bryan – to join as the band's bassist.

Such left the group in 1994, and though he never rekindled his in-studio musical relationship with the Bon Jovi crew, the bassist did make an appearance for the band's Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame induction in 2018, during which he reflected upon his time with the band.

"When Jon Bon Jovi called me up and asked me to be in his band many years ago, I soon realised how serious he was and he had a vision that he wanted to bring us to, and I am too happy to have been a part of that vision," Such said at the time. "These guys are the best. We had so many great times together and we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for those guys. Love them to death and always will."

© Roberto Finizio/NurPhoto via Getty

## Wong & Wooten

Two maestros team up.

Earlier this year, the prolific musician Cory Wong announced a new instalment of his Cory & The Wongnotes YouTube series – a variety show format he first introduced last year that sees him team up with an all-star house band and an array of guest collaborators. A recent episode is a one-hour-plus bass extravaganza which features Victor Wooten. The 70-minute showcase is front-ended with *The Great British Bass Off* – a five-minute parody of Britain's *The Great British Bake Off*, released ahead of the episode – which in turn is followed by a performance of Wong and Wooten's new collaborative track, 'Direct Flyte'. See Wong's YouTube channel for this slice of baked bass.

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## Royal Return

King's X are back!

Back in 2019, prog-metal veterans King's X announced that they planned to record their first album in over a decade. The band – led by the great singer and bassist Doug Pinnick – have now announced that the LP will be released on September 2. "It's been forever since we put out a new album, and I'm ready for the world to hear our latest offering," says Pinnick. "There's a bit of everything that you love about King's X; three sides of one is the best way to describe it. The groove is with us!"

## BOXING CLEVER

Two lightweight amps are inbound.

The acclaimed amp manufacturers Trickfish have announced the arrival of the Bullhead Mini 500, available now with a street price of $799. With a Mike Pope-designed low-noise preamp integrated with a 500W Class D power amp, the US-made unit features a four-band EQ, selectable input sensitivity, pre/post balanced DI out, a Neutrik SpeakON combo connector and a range of other connections. It's a highly lumbar-friendly product, weighing in at only 3.4 pounds (1.5 kilos) and puts out 500 watts at 4 ohms. Helpfully, it comes with auto-switching AC mains for worldwide use, a feature which we'd like to see on more amps as the live circuit begins to warm up again and a certain level of international touring resumes.

In other amplification news, the Polish Taurus company has released a product for upright bassists called the Qube-350 Acoustic. With 350 watts output, it features two channels: the first with a bass and treble contour knob in addition to bass, treble, and mids controls, the second with a parametric mids section. With an analogue preamp and the expected class D power amp, the unit comes in at 4.5 pounds (2 kilos).

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# TRIBUTE TALK

Two rock bassists have been in the news lately, united by the theme of Van Halen

Recently, the rock world was sent into a frenzy when former Metallica bassist **Jason Newsted** revealed in an interview with the *Palm Beach Post* that he had been approached by Alex Van Halen and Joe Satriani to join some kind of Van Halen-related tour. Days later, Satriani confirmed that the idea was real, and that former VH singer David Lee Roth was also involved in discussions for the tour – which Satriani said would be "a true tribute to Eddie [Van Halen] and the Van Halen legacy."

During a recent appearance on *The Mitch Lafon and Jeremy White Show*, **Michael Anthony** – who served as Van Halen's bassist for 30 years, before he was replaced by Eddie's son, Wolfgang Van Halen – confirmed that he, too, had been contacted by Satriani about the tour. In the interview, Anthony said that he had been on "a conference call with [Van Halen manager] Irving Azoff, Alex [Van Halen] and David [Lee Roth] last year."

Anthony added that he also spoke to Satriani about the idea, clarifying that the conversation was "more, you know, just something kicking around." He also revealed that, given the discussions he had been involved with, he was quite surprised to hear of Newsted's involvement. All that aside, though, Anthony added that he hopes "something happens in the future".

However, shortly after Eddie Van Halen's death in October 2020, Wolfgang Van Halen – who served as Van Halen's bassist from 2007 until their dissolution, and now leads his own band, Mammoth WVH – said that Van Halen had permanently disbanded. Replying to a tweet – which was subsequently deleted – from someone asking if Wolfgang would ever reform Van Halen without his father, he wrote: "I can confidently say I will *NEVER* replace my father in Van Halen and tour around the world disrespecting my father's memory. No EVH = No VH. Get the fuck over it, but if you can't, just quit bothering me about it and demanding I do it when I've made it very clear how I feel." Make of that what you will.

# IN THE Groove

## SLY & THE FAMILY STONE
## THERE'S A RIOT GOIN' ON
(EPIC, 1971)

Now hear this: the great Larry Graham

© ABC Photo Archives/Disney General Entertainment Content via Getty

## Let's dig out a bass-heavy LP from the vault. This month: *There's A Riot Goin' On* by Sly & The Family Stone

By 1971, the naive optimism of the Sixties was well and truly over. The counterculture was beginning to be subsumed and de-fanged; the hope of Woodstock was destroyed by the violence and death at Altamont. The Vietnam war continued to loom over a fragmenting United States, and even the golden boy Elvis Presley was singing about ghettos, about injustice, and about dreams in the aftermath of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. It was a febrile time, and danger was in the air.

Earlier in 1971, Marvin Gaye released one of the most eloquent, heartfelt and powerful albums of all time in *What's Going On*. Music was again injected with determined political energy, and Sly & The Family Stone were right in the middle of it. *There's A Riot Goin' On* is sometimes eerie, sometimes dark, and an altogether more thoughtful LP that Sly Stone – a man affiliated with the Black Panthers – had previously written.

It was also an LP that proved pivotal in setting down a new standard of funk. Step forward Larry Graham Jr., who'd joined the Family Stone in 1967, playing on the band's four previous LPs. He brought more than just a decent baritone vocal and a groove to the sound, introducing an unexpecting world to how a bass guitar could be percussive, muted, spiky, and full, with his thumping and plucking chops. He'd actually developed his percussive skills to compensate for a lack of drums in his mother's band, the Dell Graham Trio, where he was a guitarist that also played the pedals on an organ. When that organ broke, he moved to his Fender Jazz and took care of the backbeat and the snare with his unique technique.

There's a strong current of dark psychedelia running through *Riot*; the arresting poppiness of 'Family Affair' belies its plaintive message and features a rudimentary drum machine, the Maestro Rhythm King; the album opener 'Luv N' Haight' seems to implode on itself; the arrangement and production throughout is unconventional, glitchy and flirting with weirdness. A riot, in fact.

**Among the craziness there is an enduring pulse – the bass-lines of Larry Graham**

Among all the craziness there is one constant and enduring pulse – the bass-lines of Graham. The bassist pulls no punches; his snap pulls the strings harder and higher than anyone else, creating a vibrant, driving attack that sometimes enhances the syncopation and at others nails down the beat. The word 'revolutionary' is often bandied about, but here it is absolutely pertinent: not only was this Sly Stone's scream at the world, but after this album, bass playing would never be the same.

The Family Stone didn't last much longer: Sly's predilection for various drugs – as well as some of the band's own recreational preferences – were the final straw, and after cancelled gigs, Graham left a year or so later after jumping out of a hotel window to escape. He went on to play with many of the best, including Prince. There is no funkier album than this one.

# The Albums That Made Me

THIS MONTH

# Jeroen Paul Thesseling

Experimental fretless meets metal in the capable hands of this Dutch bassist. These five albums tell his story.

Armed with a fretless seven-string Warwick bass, the Dutch musician Jeroen Paul Thesseling has decades of experience with the death metal bands Obscura and Pestilence, as well as his own solo albums. He began his musical endeavours as a violinist before picking up the bass at the age of 16. From there, he studied at music college in the Netherlands, and joined Pestilence, with whom he made his first recordings.

Thesseling's parents were big fans of baroque music, which the bassist credits as an influence on his understanding of harmony, chord structure and counterpoint. He also studied jazz bass, and continued to explore the world between the frets. Indeed, those frets were soon obsolete: he switched to fretless in order to explore different tone systems.

Thesseling constantly challenges his own technical and musical skills while always keeping the function of the bass in mind: as a result, his basslines are demanding. Here, he talks us through five significant albums from his career.

**OBSCURA**
## Cosmogenesis
**(2009)**

"Something people were not used to"

"This was the first album I recorded with Obscura. You could see it as the brutal-sounding part of the band, but at the same time it's progressive-sounding. Bass had an important role in the compositions. It took me a lot of time to create the bass arrangements and make sure that there was something different going on – something people were not used to in metal at that time. I tried to work a lot with melody, as well as the functional role of the bass in the band.

"Before this album, I was very much involved with flamenco and world music. On this album there are definitely some ethnic influences. I used to play with a flamenco ensemble in the Netherlands; the bass has a percussive and melodic role, going together with the guitar melodies. You can hear it most obviously in 'Orbital Elements' – there's a bass solo and there's a kind of Moorish, flamenco feel to it, along with many slides and overtone slides. That was all very subconscious: it was not forced in any way. I grew up playing violin on a classical scholarship, learning about counterpoint, harmonic structure, chords and progressions, so when I switched to bass and metal and rock, I studied jazz bass as well, and then joined Pestilence, a progressive death metal band."

### OBSCURA
## Omnivium
**(2011)**

"We wanted to be more progressive"

"This album was a very exciting step for us. After *Cosmogenesis* had been so successful, we discussed what to do next and we decided we didn't want to write the same book again. We worked with more complexity.

"*Omnivium* has very different chord progressions; lots of elevenths, thirteenths, jazz-fusion chords. A lot was written by our drummer Hannes Grossman, who is also a piano player. We wanted to be a little less brutal and a little bit more progressive, so the song structures and scales were a step forward, skills-wise.

"I started off playing Warwick neck-through basses with six strings. By the time I started working with Obscura I already played exclusively fretless. It's so important for me to know the neck of my instruments, so I stick to one kind of bass: you have to trust that even with your eyes closed you know where you are. I have several of them, and each has a fingerboard made of different wood, which gives it a slightly different tone.

"In 2011 I switched from a six-string to a seven-string bass with a low F#. That's sub-bass, and some people are pretty sceptical about it, but I'm so used to it I couldn't think about playing without it any more."

### PESTILENCE
## Spheres
**(1993)**

"The first album recording I played on"

"This was the first album recording I was on. I was 21 or 22, and I'd just left the conservatory. It was an important moment for me: I got on very well with the group, so basically they said, 'We give you carte blanche to figure out what you think is best for the album', which was cool.

"It was very different from what was going on back then in metal. The bass guitar was very audible in the mix, and at first our label Roadrunner were pretty worried!

"The bass parts are not as complicated as the ones I later played with Obscura, but it was the start of a progressive-minded approach. It opened a door; it was always functional but it also felt very much like my own thing.

"Instead of someone telling you what to do, it was just a great adventure – to do something that makes sense for yourself, add your own ideas and refine your signature sound.

"*Spheres* was not appreciated very much by our fans back then, but you could say that it was ahead of its time: there were a lot of guitar synths and stringed instruments. It's far from what was meant to be progressive death metal, and it was only later on that people started to appreciate it for what it was."

### OBSCURA
## A Valediction
**(2021)**

"I pushed myself to higher levels of playing"

"I took a break from Obscura and metal music for a while, and *A Valediction* brings 75 percent of the *Cosmogenesis* and *Omnivium* line-up together again. It is still very progressive music, but more accessible, and I would say reaches a broader metal audience. We're still doing low vocals, and it's still highly technical: bass-wise I pushed myself to higher levels of playing and recording. There are some very complicated lines to play and it's very counterpoint-oriented. There are a lot of baroque elements in there, as well as an Eighties melodic approach. It's not as complicated, structure-wise, as *Omnivium*, but it definitely has brutal parts.

"We felt that we wanted to get a little bit out of the super-technical corner, not only audience-wise, but also for ourselves: we wanted to have more accessible songs with a little more melody. I do some octave sliding, not using an octaver pedal, but doubling on the bass – which is actually what I often do with the sub low string. Some of these lines are crazy fast. There are chords, there are octaves and you need to play very tight, so it is technically demanding. 'The Neuromancer' and 'Solaris' are examples. The more you rehearse and play the songs, the more it's muscle memory after that."

### MAYAN
## Quarterpast
**(2011)**

"You don't always need tricks and licks…"

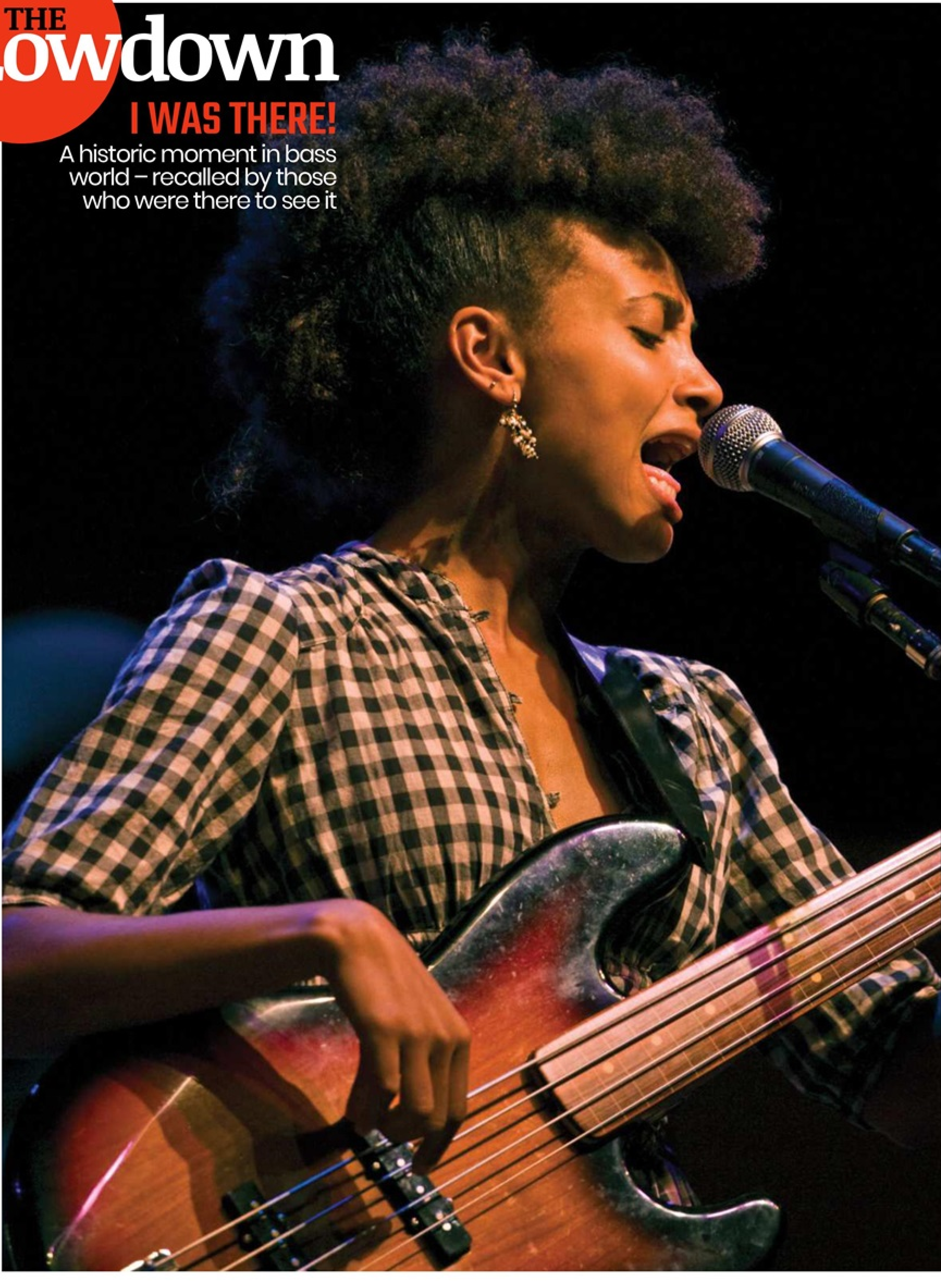
"The guitarist in this band told me they were looking for a bassist, and asked if I would like to join. He sent me some demos – just guitar lines and drums without vocals. It sounded pretty intense, and I thought I could definitely do something with it: there was a lot of space left for the bass. I lived in Italy at the time, so I flew to Germany where they had a studio, and I was surprised when I heard the vocals for the first time – they were pretty opera-oriented. When vocals are death metal grunts, there's much more space for melody in the instruments. Here, though, the vocals had the main role, and it was very different for me to work with a producer, working out how to keep the bass functional. The playing is less expressive than the progressive format, but I would have ruined the songs otherwise.

"It's important that bass players are functional: you don't always need tricks and licks. I'm happy with the bass sounds on the album. I usually play bass in stereo channels, with one extra channel added as dry, centred in the mix, and the other two channels are low-mid to high, EQ-ed differently to accentuate the stereo effect. For *Quarterpast* we just used the dry channel and didn't make it too broad, because that would have disturbed the rest of the production."

# THE Lowdown

## I WAS THERE!

A historic moment in bass world – recalled by those who were there to see it



Andrew Lepley/Redferns/Getty

On upright or electric, Spalding masters groove and taste.

# We met Esperanza Spalding back in 2006, when her first album came out. Eighteen years later, she's the leading light of her generation…

Just 22 years old when *Bass Player* first interviewed her, Esperanza Spalding seemed prepped and ready for a career in the jazz limelight, with fully-developed songwriting and a keen grasp of both performance and songwriting. Her journey into bass had literally begun by accident, she told us: "I physically stumbled upon the instrument and picked it up, and found that it made a sound when I played it. It's such an amazing instrument… the sound and the instrument itself captivated me. I was quickly able to figure out how to play with others, which was important for me at that time."

Asked about her choice of instrument, she explained: "I have an upright bass of unknown origins: we think it's French or German and from the turn of the 1900s. It's a flatback three-quarter size instrument. That's the bass that I could afford at the time. I was lucky, because I only found out later that I'd bought a good bass. I've never been the kind of person who looks for a particular sound and then tries to find an instrument to fit it. I got my bass and I figured out how to work with it."

Also an electric player, preferring Doolin basses at the time, Spalding made waves in our world with her first album, *Junjo*, and has gone on to release seven more, most recently *Songwrights Apothecary Lab*, issued last year. Not that it's been an easy ride: as any advanced upright bass player will tell you, the instrument takes a lifetime to master, if ever. "It's like the difference between guitar and cello – they're different instruments," she told us. "You have to go very slow and be conscious of what you're doing with your muscles – and you have to get rid of the word 'difficult' from your vocabulary, because otherwise you'll think it's hard, when in fact it's not as hard as you think it is!"

Craig Lovell/Corbis via Getty

## Low Life

# WRITING FOR THE STAGE

### How to create bass-lines with live shows in mind

Maximise your live bass playing with Tax The Heat bassist and BIMM Senior Lecturer Antonio Angotti.

BIMM INSTITUTE

Hello, bass players! This time around I'll be discussing the artistic aspects of writing bass parts in a band, and how these creative decisions can be somewhat influenced by having to play our bass-lines in a live setting. Although this topic is most applicable to bassists who create their own parts, it also applies to those who play covers and who like to add their own reinterpretations of the original lines.

From observations of and general discussion with bassists who are new to creating bass-lines, there seems to be an innate desire to create parts that are overly technical and which focus on showcasing individual ability, rather than considering the wider aspects of what being an effective part writer and team member requires. Let's entertain this approach for a moment and look at how it translates to the stage.

If we engineer a part that is incredibly challenging to play, it immediately limits our ability to perform, as we end up focusing too much on executing the part successfully. We subsequently put all our attention into the fretboard instead of out to the audience or to our bandmates. You'll also be much more stationary on stage as you wrangle the parts, and your playing endurance will quickly deplete, leading to aches, pains, and compromised technique to get you through. From the audience's perspective, this is hard to connect with. This is not to say that parts can't be challenging to play if you're intending to play them live – just that more practice, stamina and consideration is required to find the balance between virtuosity, musicality and a visual performance.

On the opposite end of the scale, I often hear bassists labelling root-note playing as 'boring' or 'the easy option', which I think is an unfair evaluation given that harmonically, these are the strongest notes to use. It's also a case of how you frame them using rhythm, dynamics, technique, articulation and more that can give the root approach more appeal.

Ultimately, there's a certain comfort of play that comes from leaning on root notes, and it's this comfort that allows for more performance to take place. It could also enable you to take on or co-ordinate backing vocals more easily, or to simply just relax into and enjoy the performance more.

So, when creating or adapting your bass-lines, try not to go on an individual pursuit of stroking the ego, but instead, think of the creative essentials of writing a part such as serving the song. Do this while considering how your part may eventually translate to a live setting, and whether it needs tweaking at the point of inception to accommodate more opportunities in your visual performance. Also, ask whether it's going to take more concerted rehearsal to achieve the balance between a great part – and a great performance.

## The Woodshed

# DON'T COME UNGLUED

### Keep it together, advises Rob

Ace luthier Rob Elrick brings decades of wisdom to the table. Listen up as he delivers the verdict!

The invisible films that bond together the pieces of wood which make up our prized instruments perform their unseen occupation as if by magic – but it's important to recognise that their spells can be broken, if the limits of their particular enchantment are not respected.

While the variety of glues and epoxies used in the manufacture of musical instruments are all tasked with keeping wood assembled, the types chosen for specific jobs can be selected for their ability to be *dis*assembled. This is particularly common for adhesives used in the assembly of acoustic instruments. In order to perform regular general maintenance, most acoustic instruments may require partial to full disassembly during their lifetime. Vintage violins, violas, cellos, basses, gambas and so on that have survived centuries of use – and sometimes neglect – have remained serviceable as a result of repeated disassembly and reassembly for routine maintenance and restoration, all made possible by the flexible adhesive used in their construction.

The animal hide glues favoured for construction of violins is not the only glue that allows for disassembly: all adhesives perform their function within an optimal temperature range. What this means, of course, is that an adhesive can fail at temperatures beyond its specific limited range.

While it's unlikely that any of us would intentionally expose our instrument to temperatures high enough to cause failure to the glues that hold it together, there are things we unintentionally do that sometimes lead to unintended consequences. For example, there's a place where many of our instruments spend time that can be quite hazardous – the trunk of a car. While it is certainly more secure to leave an instrument in the trunk of an unattended vehicle than in plain sight inside the cabin, those small unventilated spaces can become much hotter than the much larger cabin of the car, cooking their contents like an oven. To protect your instrument from coming unglued, follow the same warnings made for pets and children – so don't leave it in a closed vehicle during hot weather, and certainly don't shut it in the trunk!

# Theory of the Month

# MASTER MINOR-TRIAD MELODIC STRUCTURES

Joe Hubbard takes us through three ways to exploit this useful theory

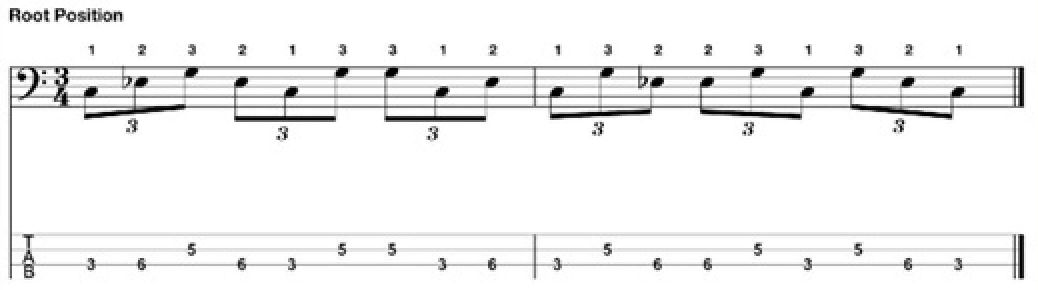
Understanding chord tones is essential for any bassist, because when you resolve your lines, you're aiming to land on a chord tone. Many of us understand this concept but are aware of very few ways to develop the melodic vocabulary needed to create interesting lines. In this lesson, I'm going to show you how to take a minor triad and dissect the melodic possibilities in root position, 1st inversion and 2nd inversion.

The three notes in the minor triad can be arranged six different ways: these different arrangements of the three-note melodies are called permutations. To organise them, if we take the number sequence 1-2-3 and systematically rearrange how these notes appear from 1-2-3 all the way to 3-2-1, we will end up with six different melodic structures to play with: 1-2-3, 2-1-3, 3-1-2, 1-3-2, 2-3-1 and 3-2-1.

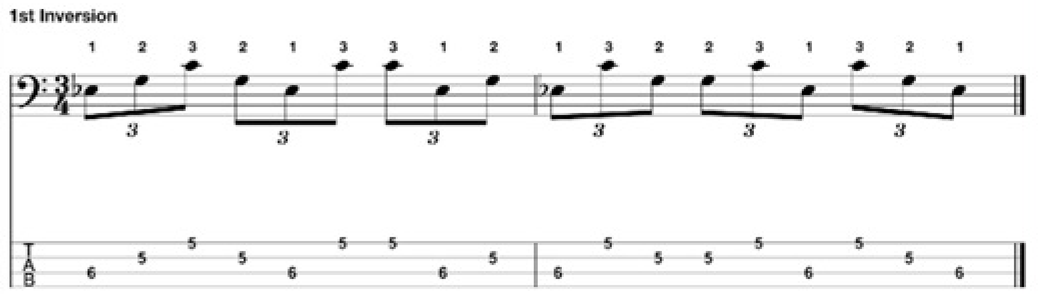
The three notes in the minor triad can be arranged six different ways: these different arrangements are called permutations

Most music teachers only recommend practising 1-2-3 and 3-2-1 in root position when playing arpeggios. With that in mind, if we then add 1st and 2nd inversions to this it creates an entirely different solution. Until next time, practise smart, work hard and play creatively.

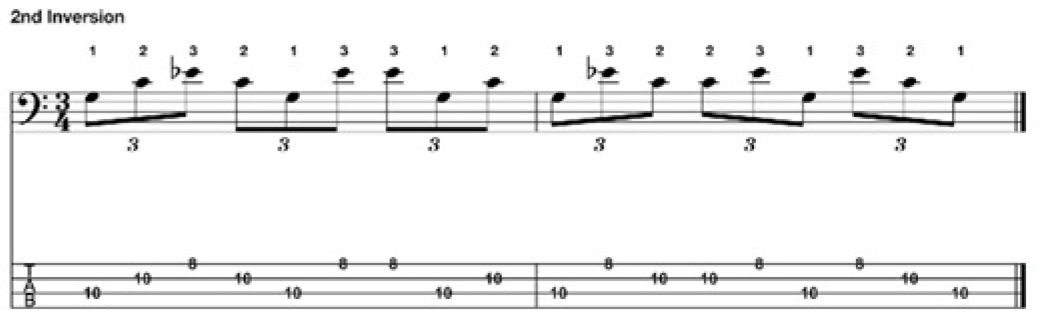
### EXERCISE ONE




### EXERCISE TWO




### EXERCISE THREE




## EXERCISE 1

The first thing to notice is that all of these exercises are written in 3/4 time with eighth-note triplets. In position, play the exercise as written and then start moving up and back down the fingerboard in half-steps. This will acclimatise you to being able to hear and feel the exercise efficiently. As you move up and down, verbalise the triads by saying C minor, D♭ minor, D minor and so on: then do a round where you say the notes in each triad out loud as you play in time.

## EXERCISE 2

In this exercise, we're doing the same thing but this time in 1st inversion. The number permutation system will be exactly the same as in Exercise 1. You're simply thinking about the first, second and third notes of a given melody and rearranging them in six different note arrangements. As well as verbalising the chord names and note names, try to name all the note functions – ♭3-5-root, for example.

## EXERCISE 3

This exercise follows the same procedure as the previous two examples, but this time we're playing the note permutations from the second inversion, which starts on the fifth of the chord. Relevantly to the previous two exercises, practise this by moving up and down in half-steps. Start slow, and play it with feeling!

At the peak of his powers, Cliff delivers the metal alongside James Hetfield.

# REMEMBERING THE RAGER

**Cliff Burton** was the second bassist with the biggest heavy metal band there has ever been or will ever be: **Metallica**. Thirty-six years since his untimely death, we celebrate his career, we dig into his tones and talents with the help of Metallica's **Robert Trujillo** – and we visit Sweden, where Cliff lost his life, to discover that his legacy is growing every year.

**Words** Joel McIver
**Photography** Getty

"The major rager on the four-string motherfucker", as the late Cliff Burton was approvingly described during his first gig with Metallica on March 5, 1983, is a revealing phrase. It's a very California-in-the-Eighties thing to call a musician, one part *Bill & Ted* and one part *Spinal Tap*, but at the same time it's completely perfect.

The "major rager" tag was bestowed on Cliff by Metallica's then-guitarist Dave Mustaine, something of a rager himself, and it has gone on to represent an era of heavy metal – and specifically, the beginnings of garage-level thrash metal – that still entrances a tribe of metalheads, even those too young to witness it in person.

Nowadays, Metallica are huge, with a brand as powerful as that of Led Zeppelin or the

Rolling Stones, and they're in their fourth decade of playing arenas. Back then, Cliff plus the other three members James Hetfield (vocals, guitar) and Lars Ulrich (drums), and either Mustaine or his successor Kirk Hammett, were young, broke and feeling their way into a new sound that was influenced equally by classic metal and hardcore punk.

Thrash metal was fast, obnoxious and unsophisticated at first, but soon evolved into a more polished sound. Many of you will already know all the historical details, so I won't go too deeply into the chronology here, but with their first three albums Metallica established an influential template that, purists argue, even the band themselves have not surpassed.

Cliff was a huge part of this, even though he was only a member of the band from 1983 to his death in September '86. Heavy metal bass was not known for being particularly inventive before he came to prominence, the blues and prog explorations of Black Sabbath's Geezer Butler and Steve Harris of Iron Maiden aside – but right from the off, Cliff was unstoppable, even playing a bass solo track called 'Anesthesia (Pulling Teeth)' on Metallica's debut album, *Kill 'Em All* (1983).

"Cliff strikes me as a player who would have said, 'This is how we're doing it'," says Robert Trujillo, Metallica's bass player since 2003. "He had a vision, and he would go for that vision. Rather than a producer trying to control him, I could see Cliff having an idea for what statement he wanted to make with the instrument. More power to him – Jaco Pastorius was the same way."

Trujillo, the producer of the acclaimed 2014 biopic *Jaco*, invokes the comparison seriously. "Somehow, Cliff would have the freedom to express the instrument and give it a personality that it did not have before in metal. He took that attitude and edge that the fusion players had, and he brought it in – and especially in thrash metal, that was pretty impressive."

Cliff's uncompromising attitude was just one aspect of his character as a bass player: he also brought unique influences, powerful technique and his own tone to Metallica. All of those were assets in his favour, and therefore to the band, with whom he recorded parts that metal bassists still learn today as a part of their basic training.

'Anesthesia', with its famous classical motifs derived from J.S. Bach and a hugely overdriven tone, was just the first of these. Burton fans will also point to his intro line in 'For Whom The Bell Tolls' and the fills in 'The Call Of Ktulu' from the 1984 album *Ride The Lightning*, as well as the intros and solos in 'Orion' and 'Damage, Inc.' from Metallica's masterpiece *Master of Puppets* ('86), as his career-best parts.

"Cliff's style was very aggressive," explains Trujillo. "When I joined Metallica, I became more familiar with him as a composer, and where he was coming from creatively. That's when I realised how special he was, because of his influences. He had an extreme connection to classical music, and you could hear that in him as a composer, but at the same time he loved punk rock. This guy came from the same place that Stanley Clarke was coming from. He was one of those kinds of players."

A gear-head from the time he started playing bass at the age of 13, Cliff's most famous instrument is his 1979 Burgundyglo Rickenbacker 4001, uniquely modded with three replacement pickups: a Gibson EB, a Seymour Duncan stacked Jazz, and a Duncan Stratocaster pickup under the bridge for extra top end. It's this bass that you can hear on *Kill 'Em All* and *Ride The Lightning*, but by the time of *Master Of Puppets*, he had switched to an Aria Pro II. This bass has become so associated with him that a signature instrument was released in 2013, followed by a Burton wah pedal from Morley two years later.

Finding Cliff's tones, let alone playing his parts, presented quite a challenge for Jason Newsted, who was Cliff's successor, and for Trujillo, who successfully auditioned after Newsted quit in 2001. Fortunately, expert help was at hand. "When I joined Metallica, my bass tech Zach Harmon had a pretty good idea of what direction we would want to go for that tone," says Trujillo, "but we also had 'Big' Mick Hughes at front of house, who was a part of that original team. All those factors help when you're trying to dial the tones."

He adds: "Although I don't play Aria, the Aria bass has a lot to do with Cliff's sound as well. It's a very midrange, edgy tone, as you know. My son Tye [now in Suicidal Tendencies] plays an Aria, and it's a great tone; it cuts through. So there's a lot of factors that would go into how to get that tone, including the Morley pedal. All that stuff plays a role."

Presumably he models Cliff's sound, rather than attempting to replicate the old gear? "I do. It depends on the gig, but I've embraced the modelling systems. There's a lot of efficiency in that, in the way we tour and the size of how we tour. I use a Fractal, although I'm just gonna tell you and all your readers this: there's nothing like air moving behind you from a stack of speakers and the amp of your choice, which for me would be an Ampeg SVT from the early Seventies, just pumping air and hitting my ass. There's no better feeling."

The four horsemen: (standing) Cliff, Kirk, James (seated) Lars.

Cliff on the *Puppets* tour, wielding his famous Aria Pro II. Note his picking hand: a fishing accident meant that he was unable to curl his pinky into his palm. Bottom right: the Swedish newspaper *Smålänningen* reports on the coach crash on September 27, 1986.

Rockbandet Metallicas basist omkom

# Föraren anhölls efter dödsolycka vid Dörarp

Then there's Cliff's picking technique to consider. A two-finger player from the Steve Harris school, he still managed to play the tremolo parts on mercilessly fast songs such as 'Disposable Heroes' and 'Fight Fire With Fire', and in uptempo song sections like the final part of 'No Remorse', with ease.

Trujillo, a three-finger player, salutes his predecessor's incredible facility. "Two-finger picking has feel: it's definitely a really grooving sort of way to play that fast stuff, and Cliff was a master of that. He could hold it down with the two fingers at a high speed and maintain the attack – and that's really special. When I first joined Metallica, I would actually start cramping up, so over the years I devised a three-finger method. Now I can cover all the tempos pretty well, and if things get too fast I throw in the third finger, but I do try to hang in there with the two-finger system as much as possible, because it just feels really good."

As Cliff's supportive, non-solo parts on *Lightning* and *Puppets* are mixed fairly low, Trujillo had to work hard to learn them when he joined Metallica. Remember, back in 2003 we didn't just go to YouTube to see what notes to play...

"Half the time, if I want to figure something out, and it's complicated or I can't hear it, I just go to YouTube and go 'Oh, there it is!' because you hear the bass on its own. Back then, though, I did a little bit of everything. I had those Cherry Lane [transcription] books, believe it or not, because I didn't know where to go. I was thrown all these songs that I had to learn, and depending on the album or the song, sometimes the bass was mixed a little low, and I had to wing it. I did as much as I could on my own, and then when I got together with James, I knew that he would help me fine-tune whatever I needed. He was obviously very helpful, but I didn't want to take all his time and go 'How does this go?' or 'What did Cliff do here?'

"For the first couple of years, I was literally just hanging on," he chuckles, "and what ended up happening was I got tired of hanging on, so I started learning songs that Metallica wasn't playing. 'The Call Of Ktulu' and 'Orion' hadn't been played; we hadn't even done 'Anesthesia' until the *Puppets* anniversary show in 2006, so I started preparing for all this stuff maybe two years before, because I didn't want to be caught at the last minute, trying to figure those songs out. I did a lot on my own, to stay ahead of the game, because for the first three years I was chasing it."

**"Cliff took that attitude and edge that fusion players have, and brought it to thrash metal"**
*Robert Trujillo*

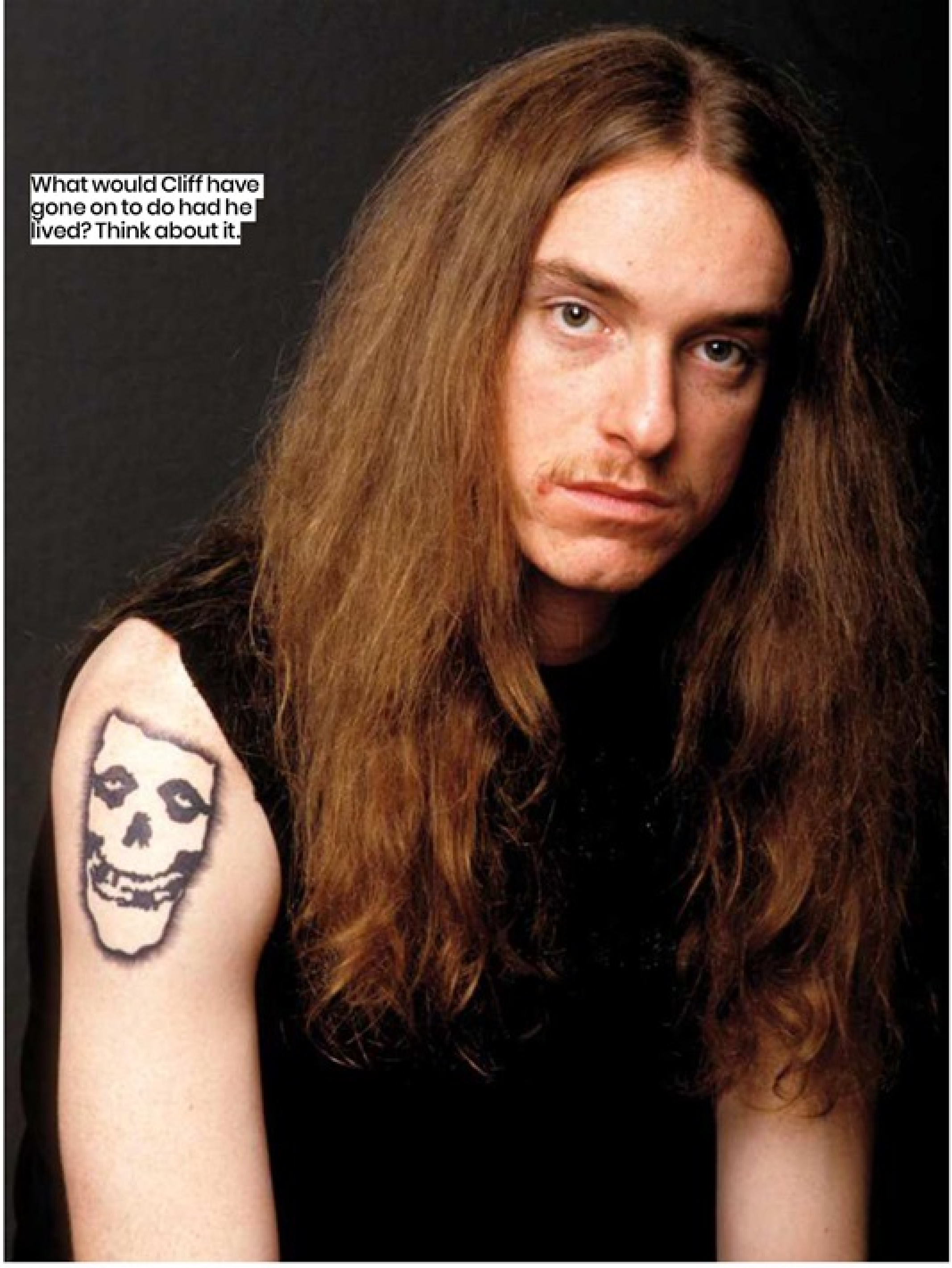
Newsted, a very different bassist to Burton who used a pick for immense solidity, but who was also required to play much simpler parts than his predecessor, presented less of a challenge, Trujillo says. "You could hear Jason's parts better for sure, and they were a bit more delegated, but still great, though. Those players are completely different, but they're both really, really great at what they do. There's an art to simplicity, and Jason brought that art. Obviously Cliff was very aggressive, very melodic, and a busier player, but very tasteful, so it's not like one way's better than the other. Everybody knows that, but it

"Although I love all aspects of Cliff's playing, speed was probably the area of his playing that had the most direct influence on my own. Cliff is one of the first bassists in metal who opted to play unison runs with the rhythm guitar for many of his bass-lines, as opposed to playing simpler lines with the drummer – which was the standard in heavy metal at that time. The fact that he was able to match James Hetfield's killer rhythm playing with fingerstyle bass technique really made an impression on me."
**ALEX WEBSTER**
**Cannibal Corpse**

"Cliff was the first guy I'd heard who went way outside the box. When I heard him I was like, 'I want to be a bass player like this.' He stands out on his own within Metallica, and that's something I try to strive for. There's a lot that people don't know about him. It's crazy that he did so much in just three or four years."
**PAOLO GREGOLETTO**
**Trivium**

"Any die-hard fan knows that Cliff's contributions were part of the ingenuity that propelled Metallica to the greatest heights which metal music has ever known. Cliff's work will always be admired and remembered for its greatness, and I'm glad Metallica soldiered on to do what they did next in their career, because they clearly built on the Cliff era of their music."
**DAVID ELLEFSON**
**ex-Megadeth**

"Cliff was very musical and all over the fretboard – like lead bass in a Grateful Dead sort of way. His successor, Jason Newsted, had strong fundamentals, appropriate and tasteful



What would Cliff have gone on to do had he lived? Think about it.

would be safe to say that his parts were easier for me to learn, for sure."

Trujillo, still yet to find fame in the crossover punk/metal band Suicidal Tendencies when Cliff died in 1986, never met the great man. "I never met Cliff, but I wish I would have," he says. "I have friends that I grew up with who met Cliff, and a lot of the guys in the Suicidal camp met him. It's weird: one of my best friends is Mike Bordin of Faith No More, and another great friend is Jim Martin [formerly of the same band], and both of those guys were best friends with Cliff. When I joined Ozzy Osbourne's band and Mike was the drummer, I'd see photos of him and Cliff at Mike's house when I'd come up to stay with him in San Francisco. I could feel this energy and vibe there, with the spirit of Cliff. I didn't know him, but it's always nice to feel the connection."

For decades after Cliff's death, his father Ray Burton represented him among Metallica's fanbase, right up until he passed away in 2020 at the age of 92. "Ray Burton was a good friend," says Trujillo. "He would come and see me play with my bands Mass Mental or Infectious Grooves. He was very supportive of music as a whole, and he loved music that was driven by bass. I looked up to him, because he'd been through so much in his life. He kept a positive frame of mind through everything, and I admire that tremendously. He was very good with my kids, too. He would encourage Tye to play, and to study piano and theory, because that was what Cliff did. Tye took that in, and studied, and it made him a better musician. Ray was like that with everyone."

So how do the members of Metallica look back on their fallen bass player, so long after his departure? "It's about looking back and being thankful for what he brought them," says Trujillo. "Cliff was wise in a lot of ways, and very musical. He had a knowledge and a palette of music that was very broad, so he would have been teaching them classical to Lynyrd Skynyrd to punk rock. He brought all those ingredients into Metallica."

"I always believe that everybody brings something into Metallica: it's the sign of a great band. They learned a lot from him, and they looked up to him, and they celebrate him with every show they do and every song that they play that he was a part of. They feel that from the heart."

# SWEDE SENSATION

## On May 14, hundreds of **METALLICA** fans flew to rural Sweden for the Museum's grand opening – and celebrated Cliff's life with loud music and a ton of headbanging. ***Bass Player*** was there too...

**Words**: Joel McIver **Pics**: Tom Johansson

You couldn't pick a less likely spot to celebrate a fallen thrash metal icon than Laganland, a gathering of buildings by a remote country road in rural Sweden. Drive right in, though, and you'll see a hotel, a petrol station, a hunting store, a moose reserve (really) and now the Cliff Burton Museum, dedicated to the Metallica bassist who lost his life in a nearby coach crash on September 27, 1986.

There's quite a back story here. The memorial stone – installed nearby in 2006, 20 years after the accident – was the initiative of a group of Swedish fans called Cliff In Our Minds, primarily Mattias Ekberg, Tony Asplund, Erik Lysén and Johan Mörling, together with the owners of a nearby pub, Gyllene Rasten. The funds to create the stone were raised privately.

Now, the Cliff Burton Museum has been created as a meeting-place for the fans who visit the memorial stone. The project initiated at the local tourism department – in Swedish, föreningen Bergabygdens Kultur och Turism – and primarily their associates Krister Ljungberg, Anna-Lena Ljungberg and Magnus Strömberg. Funding for the museum installation came from the Swedish National Heritage Board, which assisted the Museum with a grant of SEK 300,000 (around $30,000).

The fact that these groups of devoted fans have pulled it off so successfully – with no assistance other than the moral support of Cliff's family, who shared details of the museum launch at their social media – is miraculous. In a speech that I gave at the event, I made a point of congratulating these fans on their hard work: there's no equivalent monument to any other prematurely fallen musician that I can think of, whether that's Marc Bolan, Randy Rhoads or any of hundreds of others.

At the launch event on May 14, the idea is to celebrate Cliff's legacy and the final days of his life, spent not in his hometown of San Francisco but here, half a planet away. As his death in the coach crash has never really been explained – the driver claimed black ice was the cause, although this seems to have been unlikely – there's never been closure for Burton fans, on this continent or elsewhere. It's still surreal that he died so young and so unnecessarily, and to be here today, knowing that we're minutes away from the place where he died, is to experience a wave of mixed emotions.

As the visitors peruse the exhibits, some are deep in thought, others are tearful, and still others are in full metal mode, slamming beers and throwing the horns. Cliff's story, as told through documents, diaries, book excerpts, films and even a drum kit brought over by Mexican fanclub president Aelfredo LeRoux, is totally compelling: it's like he's with us as we watch tribute band Metaholica power through their set.

Cliff's friend Frank Bello of Anthrax – who opened for Metallica on that final tour – dials in on Zoom to pay tribute to his fallen comrade, to the loud appreciation of the crowd. We're treated to a rendition of '(Anesthesia) Pulling Teeth' by YouTube sensation Kelly Gonzalez and LeRoux on drums, and as evening comes, people drift away, evidently affected by what they've experienced.

We're not done, though, and after paying our respects at the memorial stone, we transfer to Hotel Terraza in Ljungby – the same hotel where the shellshocked members of Metallica stayed after the crash. We watch Metaholica deliver another pulverising set, and there's a lot of drinking... and also quite a few tears, as you might imagine. Cliff would definitely have appreciated it.

supportive bass-lines, and strong backing vocals. They are damn near opposites... Interesting indeed!"
**DAVID VINCENT**
**Vltimas, I Am Morbid**

"I saw Cliff Burton as the lead guitarist of bass players. His style and delivery is at the top in metal and rock for me. I put him up there with Lemmy, Steve Harris and Mike Dean. He kept Metallica's feet on the ground and never put himself above his fans. The proof is on those first three timeless records. An inspiring mofo!"
**NICK OLIVERI**
**ex-Queens Of The Stone Age**

"I was fascinated by the sounds Cliff made, because you didn't think a bass could make those sounds. He was a great physical player: he had the full package of techniques, but he had that crucial extra element – a voice on the bass. When Cliff played, you knew it was him, because there was character in his playing. He could make sounds that no other bass player could make. He was an artist on bass, for me, and he painted a picture with his instrument."
**FRANK BELLO**
**Anthrax**

"The first song I'm dedicated to learning is 'Anesthesia (Pulling Teeth)'. That's the reason why I have my Rickenbackers, because of him. I fucking love Cliff. He was unbelievable. Did you see [Metallica's live album] *S&M2*, with the standup bass playing it? Oh my God. I had chicken skin, I was watching it over and over. I thought that was just so beautiful for Cliff. I'm all old Metallica. I probably listen to *Ride The Lightning* and *Kill 'Em All* every week, if not every other day."
**JASON MOMOA, actor**

© Arnold Neimanis

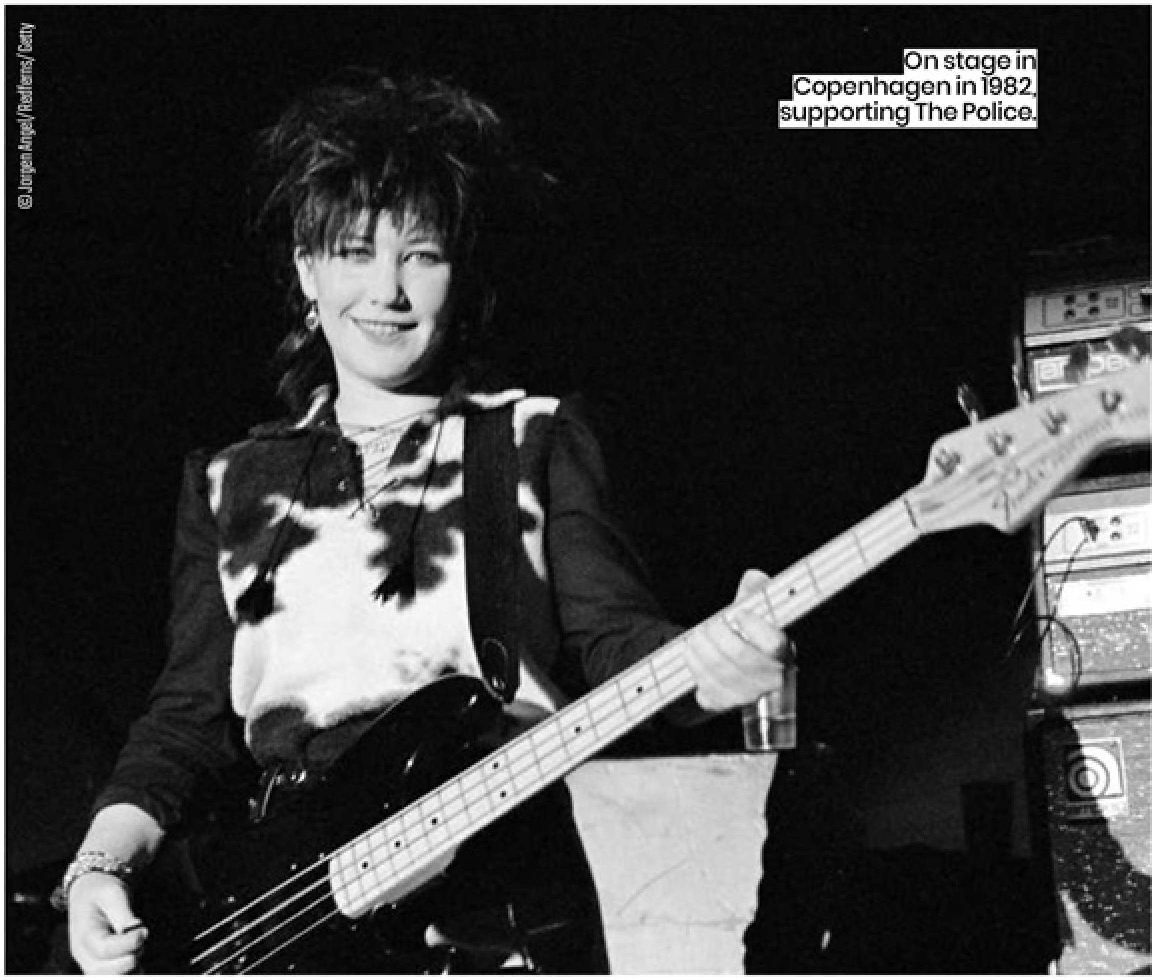
# PASS GO

## Go-Go's bassist **Kathy Valentine** reveals high times and low points in her memoir, *All I Ever Wanted*, a deep dive into abuse, addiction and redemption, as well as blazing a trail for a generation of bass players.

**Interview**: Joel McIver **Photography**: Arnold Neimanis, Getty

Kathy Valentine's autobiography *All I Ever Wanted* is a great book, but not an easy one to read. Although its author is now much healthier and happier in 2022 than the young musician described in its early chapters, the traumas she suffered as a kid – betrayal, rape and abortion among them – and the subsequent addictions that she battled in later life are hard to absorb.

Fortunately, Valentine is easy to talk to. Now 63 and sober for more than half her life, she looks back on the events described so vividly in her book with a clear eye. This is just as well, because even aside from the low points of her personal life, she's been on a rocky journey. The Go-Go's, which she joined in 1980 at the age of 21 – picking up the bass despite zero previous experience of the



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On stage in Copenhagen in 1982, supporting The Police.

instrument – were the first multi-platinum-selling, all-female band to play instruments themselves, write their own songs, and have a chart-topping album with their debut LP, *Beauty & The Beat*. The success of the early singles 'We Got The Beat' and 'Our Lips Are Sealed' fed a relentless, drug-fuelled schedule and, in Valentine's case, the acquisition of a dependency on alcohol.

After the Go-Go's eventually crashed to a halt in 1985, Valentine recorded with bands such as the Bluebonnets and released solo music. The main band reunited in 1990, 1992, 2018 and this year, with Valentine raising a daughter, sobering up and dealing with the pitfalls of life along the way. She's now based in Austin, Texas, with a healthy overview of all the crazy stuff she's been through, as we discover…

**Are you pleased with the way your book turned out, Kathy?**

I'm very pleased. I'm so proud of it, because it was really hard. I almost gave up several times, actually. I just wanted to make sure that I was doing a good job as a writer. It was very important to me that anyone who read the book would go, 'Whether I like her or not, it's well done' because if you've written a good book, then people are more receptive to your next one. So my main questions were 'Is it well done?', and 'Am I meeting my deadline?' It wasn't until I sent it off and there was no turning back that I went 'Oh my God – people are actually gonna read this'. I was a little horrified, but it was too late.

**What were you worried about?**

I just feel like it was very honest and raw and kind of brutal at times. That's just how I am. I don't dance around the truth and I'm always pretty honest. If I have an issue with someone, I don't pretend like it's not there, you know, so I wrote my book very much aligned with how I am as a person, but at the same time I felt a little uncomfortable. But it's been great.

**There's a lot of sadness in there, especially in your teenage years.**

Yeah. I processed a lot. I think a lot of my drinking and using drugs was to deal with that sadness, and wanting never to face any of that stuff. Getting sober and then writing the book were the two biggest ways of facing what happened and how I behaved. There's a lot of forgiveness in the book, too. I really felt that was a strong thing that comes through.

**You write about a home invasion in 1985 when a man broke into your home and tied you up. Was he ever caught?**

No. He actually tried to come back, but I never stayed in that house again. There was too much trauma.

> "Every day we have a new chance to take better care of ourselves, and look out for everyone else"

**Was writing about it therapeutic?**

No – it actually brought it all back. The last line of that chapter is about how broken I was when that happened. I had lost the band, and I was living in a house in the Hollywood Hills that I didn't know how I was going to pay for. I'd bought it because I thought the band was going to make an album. And now I didn't even feel safe there any more. I just felt so vulnerable and beaten down.

**How many years is it since you got sober?**

I've just had 33 years. I don't miss it at all, you know. I feel very fortunate that I didn't wreak more havoc and do more damage. I was very

creative: it wasn't like I was just sitting around in the corner of a dark room. I was very much a productive addict and user, but I feel really grateful that I didn't inflict more harm on people and myself. Everyone's heard the absolute worst stories, where people go to jail or overdose, but my experience wasn't quite that extreme. I think my story shows that it doesn't have to get that bad. You can just get to the point where your life is not working, and it's unmanageable.

**On YouTube, there are a bunch of Go-Go's bass covers. Have you seen them?**
Some of them. I just saw one the other day, a guy who did a really good job. I wrote him and I said, 'I'm gonna steal some of your passing notes' because he was doing it his own way, and some of those notes were super cool.

**Do you play those parts differently now?**
Well, I believe that I'm a smoother, more fluid player now. I was new on the instrument when I joined the Go-Go's: when we made our first album, I'd only been playing the bass for probably six months. And I remember our producer, Richard Gottehrer, said, 'I want you to look at Gina's [Schock, drummer] foot, and every time she hits the kick drum, you play a note'. Of course, with time I feel like I've gotten much more fluid and more relaxed, but it was still a really good lesson for a new bass player. It's funny – we recently did a show and Gina had some degeneration in her hand, and couldn't play the gig, so my dear friend and friend of the band Clem Burke filled in. His kick drum patterns were very different, so I was back in that place – and I had to figure out very quickly that I needed to adjust my accents to fit his bass drum patterns.

**How has your stage performance changed over the years?**
I'm more comfortable on stage now. Sometimes I look back at old photos or films and I can tell that I'm self-conscious. Anything that happens now won't bother me. My pants could split up to the butt and I wouldn't panic, you know. Everything that could possibly happen or go wrong has already happened and gone wrong.

**Is it correct that you joined the Go-Go's with no previous experience on bass?**
Yeah. I'd moved to Los Angeles to make it and find a band, and the band I'd started hadn't gone anywhere quick enough. When I was approached by the Go-Go's, they had come back from England and they were happening. They could sell out a club, and I hadn't experienced that, so when I was asked if I could play the bass, I didn't even hesitate. I really thought, 'How hard can it be?' I was a guitar player, and I could play with a pick. 'It's fewer strings, and they're easier to hit!' was the extent of what I thought.

> "I wanted to be in an all-female band as I wanted to see that in the pantheon of huge bands"

**Talk about the importance of Suzi Quatro.**
Well, I didn't see her as playing the bass. I saw her as a rock star fronting a band with an instrument. All the women I'd seen that were rock stars were lead singers. I didn't know about the band Fanny, and the Runaways weren't around yet, so Suzi was literally the very first female rock star I saw who was not just singing, but also holding down the low end and fronting the band. That was a turning point for me, because even though I was playing the guitar, and even though I loved rock and roll, it hadn't occurred to me that I could buy an electric guitar and plug it into an amplifier and start a band. I've just written a letter to the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame advocating for Suzi, and I'll continue to advocate for her, because with women and music it's not always that you've had this many hits or this many albums sold, it's about how many people you inspired and affected.

**Like Suzi, you've generally played Fenders throughout your career.**
Yeah. There was a time where I had an Ibanez, probably because I saw a photo of myself on stage and thought that the proportions of my Fender were off for my size and so I wanted something that fit my body. I don't remember the Ibanez model, but it was small. After that, there was one tour where I knew someone at Gibson and she gave me a Les Paul bass. I covered it in stickers, even though it was just a loaner. I'm sure they weren't pleased to get it back with stickers all over it.

Los Angeles, 2006.
© J. Strauss/FilmMagic/Getty

**Les Paul basses are great, but they're heavy.**
Oh, so heavy, yeah. And then somewhere along the road I started loving a Fender Jazz neck with a Precision body. Fender never endorsed me – much to my annoyance! – but they would often slap a Jazz neck on the body of a P and lay it on me for a tour. So that's pretty much been my main thing, although Bolin Guitars have also made me a Telecaster bass which is completely silver sparkle, from the headstock down. It's hollow, so it's really light. I love the Fender VI bass, too. It's so awesome to play, because you can do chords.

**Do you slap and pop?**
Only when I'm goofing around in rehearsal. I'm not in that kind of band. My band just needs what I do. In the Go-Go's, there's no room for much of anything other than being solid, melodic and in the pocket. I just tried to make the songs really solid and rocking. I think there are two kinds of bass players – the ones like me that come in the side door from

With Belinda Carlisle and Gina Schock at the Go-Go's' Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame Induction in 2021: "I'm more comfortable on stage now."

© Kevin Kane/Getty

the guitar, and then there's the ones that start with bass. We're all real bass players, though.

**Which amps do you use?**
In the Eighties, I think I was the only person that Gallien-Krueger ever endorsed. I've got an ad somewhere – I should show it to you. Other than that, it's pretty much always an Ampeg SVT in the studio. I like the fliptop amp a lot.

**Any effects in the chain?**
I wish, but no. The Go Go's are – what's a nice way of saying rigid, and that everything stays the same? You know, the formula works.

**Consistent?**
Yes – so there's no room for effects. If I played bass in another band, I would probably have all kinds of stuff going on. I love fuzz bass. I love wah. But I tell you what, for my book, I did a soundtrack, and I played everything on that, and I really loved some of my bass playing on it. It was the first time in a long time where I was I impressed myself, because it's some of the best bass playing I've ever done. And because it was a soundtrack, I could do whatever I wanted. I wasn't bound by any restrictions of being in a punky pop band. On one song, I even played slide bass. I just thought, 'What would it be like to play bass with a finger slide?'

**A lot of young, female bassists will read this. What would you like them to learn from your book?**
That's a really good question. It's a very different era now than when I grew up. It was right after the Sixties, so I was a teenager in an era when everyone was having sex. But as the mother of a daughter, who's now 19, what I've always tried to tell her is that all that stuff can really get in the way of your self-esteem. There's nothing more important than how you feel about yourself, and nothing you can do can make someone else see you the way you want to see yourself. That's what I think I would try to convey: to make sure that you always behave and treat others in a way that makes you feel good about yourself. That comes from your actions and the way you treat others. I think that's the biggest thing I've learned. As a child, I felt very unvalued: I felt very thrown out into the world. It was my job to take care of myself, but I didn't have any training, and I was too young, so I didn't do a very good job of taking care of myself. It's something I'm still learning how to do. Every day, we have a new chance to take better care of ourselves, and if you can do that, you can look out for everyone else a bit better.

**I don't necessarily feel qualified to say this, but I hope that conditions are better for young women in the music industry nowadays.**
I think so. I've seen an amazing amount of women playing instruments and hired by major artists, everyone from Beyoncé to Pink and so on. But what I don't see is a lot of women starting bands that are all female. I don't know why, but I would like to see more of that. From the minute I started playing, I wanted to be in an all-female band, because I wanted to see that band in the pantheon of huge bands. The other thing is that I get frustrated, because on YouTube you see so many women sitting in their bedroom and shredding away on their guitar or their bass. I want to tell them, 'Get out in the world. You don't have to play in your bedroom!'

*All I Ever Wanted is out now. Info: https://kathyvalentine.com.*

# ROAR POWER

**Masters of arena-conquering anthems, Def Leppard have returned with a new album, *Diamond Star Halos*. Bassist Rick Savage tells *BP* about his love for Sting, why playing with a pick isn't always best practice – and how the perennial rockers pieced together one of their finest albums since *Hysteria*.**

**Interview:** Amit Sharma **Photography:** Getty

Few rock bass players have embraced their unique position within a band as well as Def Leppard's Rick 'Sav' Savage. But then again, he's a lot more than a bass player, contributing to the songs' often-grandiose harmonies live on stage, co-writing many of their biggest tracks and even going as far as tracking some of the guitars – something which bass players are rarely afforded the opportunity to do – over a career spanning four and a half decades.

It's this vantage point that gives him a greater understanding of his instrument's role in the context of a group, acting almost as the mediator between melody and rhythm. That's as apparent now, on this year's twelfth studio album *Diamond Star Halos*, as it was on 1987's best-seller *Hysteria*.

"The bass player is the glue and has an observation point that encompasses all sides of the band," he explains. "You're the bridge between the rhythm and the melody. From that viewpoint, you can see things a lot clearer – and without you the whole thing will fall apart. Certainly not in our band, but I do get the impression that in a lot of groups the guitar players are mainly focused on guitars and don't really venture beyond that, because... well, they're guitar players and all about playing guitar! Singers can be very much the same way: they front the band and mainly focus on lyrics and melodies. And actually, some of my favourite bass players are the ones who sing, like Sting, who totally gets it. His bass parts will be in sympathy with his vocal lines, because he's the one doing both. I love that – it's always about the song."

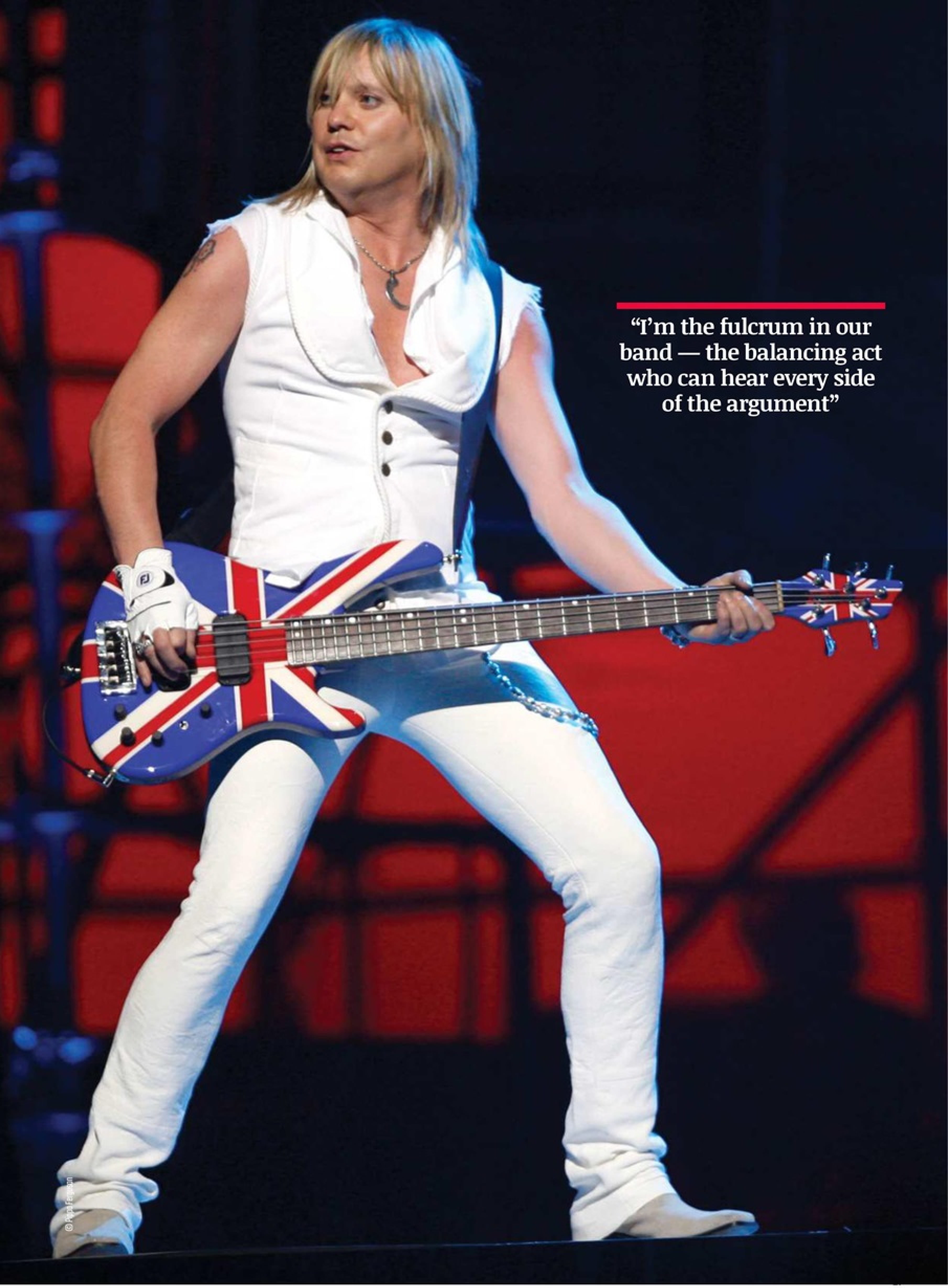
If there's a quality to his own playing, continues Savage, it's centred around his awareness of what he's there to do. And in Def Leppard, his job is to ensure that the twin guitars and big vocal harmonies are portrayed in their best light, while also locking in with Rick Allen's drums.

"The bass player tends to have the view of everybody in equal measure, including the drummer. I always feel like I'm the fulcrum in our band – the balancing act who can hear every side of the argument. Normally, the compromise is me. That's my role. Usually they say, 'Well, if Sav thinks so, then fuck it, go with what he says!'"

The new music feels like Def Leppard's finest for quite some time. The opening track 'Take What You Want' – one of Savage's main co-writes – carries all the flair of their biggest anthems, treated with a hard-hitting modern edge. As ever, it's the juxtaposition between their mellifluous Beatles-indebted melodies and driving rock riffs that takes the music to its limits, proving yet again just why Def Leppard were destined for greater things than the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal movement into which they were lumped early on.

"'Take What You Want' started on acoustic, and yeah, the descending line is quite Beatlesy," says Savage. "Later on, I decided to take that acoustic riff onto a proper electric and it sounded huge. One of the best things about recording this album was the fact we were sat in our own little studios, doing our own bits. You start experimenting because nobody else has to listen. You've got nothing to lose. I came up with things I wouldn't normally come up with if I was with the band in the studio, because people start looking at the clocks and wondering when they get to solo... We used the extra time from the pandemic to solidify things and make an album that we'd never have been able to finish until 2024."

Other highlights on the album include mid-tempo rocker 'Kick' ("a groovy and fun song influenced by T-Rex and the early Seventies"), the octave-layered 'Fire It Up' ("We double-tracked my bass with a dirty Moog sound for extra thickness") and country ballad 'This Guitar', which saw Savage ditching the pick for a fingerstyle approach. Though he's predominantly stuck with a plectrum over the years, the new track – featuring guest vocals from the bluegrass singer Alison Krauss – involved some high slides that called for more warmth in delivery.



"I'm the fulcrum in our band — the balancing act who can hear every side of the argument"

(This pic) Sav at far left with members of Kiss in 2006, (top right) jamming with Dr Brian May, (right) the MTV years: Leppard in 1992.

"It's very rare for me to switch between pick and fingers like that in the same song," explains Savage. "A lot of the song is reasonably low, so I'm playing with a pick, but there's a little sustained break where I slide up really high to play with my fingers. When you pick stuff up high, it never really sits right, but when you get your fingers on it, all of a sudden it sounds nice and round. It's so bulbous and comforting, because of the warmth of the tone. It's a special track to me because I also recorded the 12-strings on it. I said to Phil [Collen, guitars] that we should add some, and he told me, 'Great – you do it then!"

Then there are the tracks that feel like new territory for Def Leppard. 'Liquid Dust', for example, seems to owe more to Nineties alternative rock groups such as Smashing Pumpkins than early glam. Elsewhere, 'U Rok Mi' could very well be the closest Savage has ever come to the Manchester scene that laid the groundwork for the Britrock movement of the same decade.

"I can see the Smashing Pumpkins connection – 'Liquid Dust' has that really heavy bass tone and it's definitely a bit Nineties," says Savage. "That song wouldn't have had that same appeal to me without the sizzle to carry the weight. And 'U Rok Mi' is all about feel, because it's mainly just two notes. Anybody can play two notes a tone apart, but giving it that motion is really important – and that's probably why you're picking up on a Manchester vibe, because a lot of bass-lines from that scene were like that. You have to make it dance, so the main reference point for me on that song was 'Crazy' by Seal."

As a lot of the music was strung together remotely, it's difficult for Savage to recall exactly which amps were used on the tracks. He'd be working from his home studio, sending files across to the band's front-of-house engineer Ronan McHugh, who would then re-amp and layer as co-producer for the album. It's likely that Sav's favoured Gallien-Krueger Fusion 550 heads will have been involved at some point, typically spotted driving two 4x10s on each side of the drum kit for the group's live performances. As for the instruments in his hands, his Jacksons also played their part, with the interesting addition of an old vintage bass he had lying around.

"For a lot of the tracks, I actually used a broken old Fender Jazz that I had in my basement for over 30 years," he recalls. "The pots were a little crackly, but when I started playing it, the bass just had this thunder to it. I thought, 'Fucking hell!' I did use my Jackson five-strings as well, and they always sound great, but for the more quirky and gritty sounds it was the Jazz. Even Ronan, when he first heard the tones, was like, 'What the hell is *that*?' I told him it was me experimenting with an old Fender for the track 'Open Your Eyes', which has this big distorted bass-line. It also felt easier to play on the Jazz for some reason. I was going direct into Logic, completely clean with no effects, and then Ronan would take the true signal and treat it afterwards."

**"I've never been a big experimentalist. I'm driven by melodies and textures within the song"**

The bass-line in 'Let's Get Rocked' gives it motion and urgency, we note. "That's actually something I had a problem with – because my natural tendency is to be really lazy and sit behind the beat. That's just how I hear things. To create that tension of moving forward fast, the feel had to be just right. It wasn't meant to be cool and swingy and laid-back. There's certainly an element of humour to the track, which fortunately most people got, although maybe some didn't. Even now, it's still one of the songs that people absolutely love when we play live. I don't completely get it myself, but at the time it sounded like a great idea and I guess we were proved right!"

Which exercises does he use to warm up? "I still do this one today. I'll run the diminished scale starting with my pinky on the 12th fret of the low E, my fourth finger on the 10th fret of the A-string and so on. It's a real stretch across all the strings. Then I'll start to descend by a semitone every time I come back up. Doing big stretches like that will strengthen your fingers, because they have to co-operate, and it also sharpens your mind. It's an exercise I learned when I was 18, and although it sounds a little boring or naff at times, I still use it now. It's the best one I've learned for improving your technique."

Savage describes himself as a minimalist when it comes to pedals. While he happily admits that they're certainly handy tools to help bring different ideas and colours to life, the prospect of a giant pedalboard has never really appealed – especially given the dynamic of the band he plays in.

"If I'd been in a band with one guitar player, maybe there would have been more scope to fill out the bottom end in a different way," shrugs the bassist. "But I've never been a big experimentalist when it comes to gear. I'm more driven by the melodies and textures within the song than concentrating on the other side of things. When you've got two guitarists as good as Phil and Vivian Campbell, all I have to do is make them sound bloody good – which is the easiest job in the world!"

Thankfully for us, it's a job he clearly loves to do.

***Diamond Star Halos is out now.***
***Info: www.defleppard.com***

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# FOUR PLAY

Slash bassist **Todd Kerns** is on a mission to deliver the very best bass he can – and gives us some valuable nuggets of career advice.

**Interview:** Ellen O'Reilly **Photography:** Future Studio, Getty

Guns N'Roses guitarist Slash released a new album, 4, a while back, with his backing band the Conspirators and Myles Kennedy on vocals. Bassist Todd Kerns, a long-time member of Slash's band, delivers a powerful performance with Gibson and Orange gear, and has a sense of style that would make the devil himself envious. He's dressed head to toe in black when we meet him, rocking every skull-shaped piece of silver imaginable, but despite this demonic look he's friendly and softly spoken.

"The bass was the first instrument that I related to," he tells *BP*. "Of course, I picked up an acoustic guitar as a kid, and my father, in his wisdom, decided 'Well, you have a guitar – now let's get you on bass'. So we went down to the shop and he bought me a Gibson EB-3, which I still have. That was when it all began. It seemed like everyone was playing guitar or drums, and you always had some sort of flamboyant character as the singer: nobody really wanted to be the bass player."

*BP* readers will recognise this all-too-common origin story. "I was just a child," continues Kerns, "so I found myself playing in bands with guys who were much older and more advanced than me. That was great for me, because you find yourself playing catch-up. I ended up pushed into being the singer in some bands, and when my little brother started playing bass I moved to rhythm guitar, but bass has always been a part of my life."

Asked about his influences, Kerns explains: "Paul McCartney is always the one I go back to, because I play with a pick and I can play with my fingers. In *Bass Player* there's always this thing of guys with picks versus guys without picks, like a bizarre rivalry, which I find kinda funny. To me it's not really about one or the other, it's whatever you started as. McCartney was a guitarist – he wasn't really a bass player until he had to be. He just happened to become one of the most influential bass players in history, with the ability to sing and play his bass parts at the same time. That's something I'm constantly inspired by, as a singer who plays bass."

Aggression also plays a part in the Kerns bass approach, he says. "I got really into punk rock when I was young, so guys like Dee Dee Ramone were the basis of the aesthetic of what I do. A lot of what we gravitated towards was the visual aspect of punk rock; the bass is really low and he's playing with a pick and hopping around. I also like guys like John Entwistle, with that really over-the-top, noisy kind of playing. There's a lot of different kinds of players that I really like, but it always seemed like I went into the more aggressive area as opposed to the more jazz area. I have a deep appreciation for all that stuff, but I always found myself in very loud rock'n'roll bands."

Kerns has played with major artists such as Adam Levine, Alice Cooper and Sammy Hagar. Did his vocal ability help him to get those gigs? "Absolutely, it really has," he confirms. "Being able to carry a harmony part is really useful. In this band, I'm singing a lot – there's a lot of times where I'm up at the mic during the show. When I was really young I was always fascinated by Sting's ability to play and sing at the same time, because the rhythms in his songs are so complex. I find myself doing it all the time: we'll be in the studio and we'll record a vocal part, with a harmony that I'll be singing live, and I don't realise until I get back to rehearsing that it's really challenging to play and sing it at the same time. I have to split my brain into the bass part and the singing part."

Does he have any advice for bassists looking to follow in his footsteps? "It really is just a case of being in the right place," he tells us. "You gotta go to London or New York or L.A. and get in with other musicians and show that you can do it. Your life is basically an audition – everything you do on stage or in the studio is preparing you for what's to come. For me, Guns N'Roses' music was in my DNA, so when I met Slash, it was like 'What are we doing? 'Nightrain'? Okay!' I just knew the songs. If it was a case of coming down and playing with a band like Yes, then clearly I'd have to do a lot of homework, but because GN'R are such a part of my being, it came naturally to me. It was a huge turning point moving from my home country of Canada to Las Vegas, and embracing the whole career aspect of Los Angeles. You hit walls as a musician – but when life presents a wall, and you can't go any further, you have to find ways around that wall."

***4* is out now on Gibson Records.**
***Info: www.slashonline.com***

Trading vocals with Myles Kennedy

© Tim Mosenfelder/WireImage/Getty

# JACK BRUCE

## The bass maestro behind Cream, who departed this plane in 2014, looks back on his remarkable career in this meeting of minds from 2003

**Interview:** Joel McIver **Photography:** Getty

In the late Fifties and early Sixties the bass guitar was a simpler, safer beast. You listened to your guitarist and plunked away at your root notes, taking care not to step on the drummer's toes, of course. That was just the way it was, and that was the way it would always be – that is, until the bass guitar's role was changed forever by a small group of pioneering players including Paul McCartney and the late John Entwistle. And, of course, Jack Bruce.

Born in Lanarkshire, Scotland in 1943, Bruce brought an acute melodic awareness to the bass guitar from the moment he picked one up. By the time he was 30 he was a veteran of Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated, the Graham Bond Organisation – an incarnation of which featured the young John McLaughlin – John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, innumerable sessions and, of course, Cream, in which he created a mesmerising, blues- and jazz-laced rock spectacle alongside drummer Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton.

After Cream split in late 1968, Bruce went on to release a string of solo albums which demonstrated his trademark blend of jazz, rock, blues and – latterly – world and ethnic influences. He also participated in a number of high-profile tours in Ringo Starr's band and elsewhere, as well as working with Gary Moore and Ginger Baker in the BBM project.

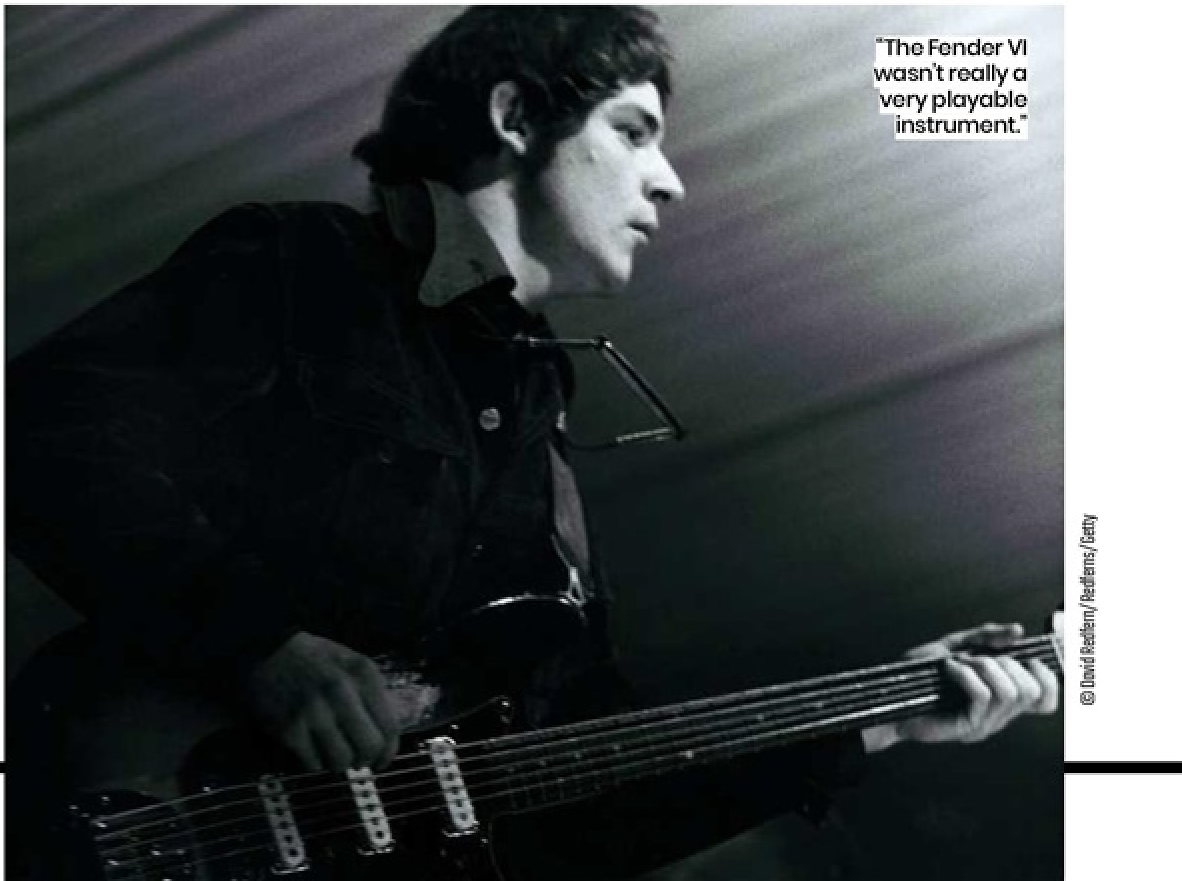
In April and May 2003, Bruce's solo albums *Songs For A Tailor*, *Things We Like*, *Harmony Row*, *Out Of The Storm*, *How's Tricks?*, *Jet Set Jewel*, *Jack Bruce And Friends Live At The Free Trade Hall, Manchester* and a compilation, *An Introduction To Jack Bruce* were reissued on CD, along with a Cream album, *Live At The BBC*. Jack was on fine form when we spoke to him that year, and why not? He was in the autumn years of a life well lived.

**Are you pleased with the reissues, Jack?**
Oh, of course. It's nice to have them out, but it's especially nice to have *Jet Set Jewel* out at last because I never thought it would come out. I thought its time had come and gone. Basically it wasn't a commercial enough album for what the suits wanted: Rod Stigwood was selling out to Polygram at the time, and I guess they wanted the Bee Gees.

**You obviously weren't disco enough for them?**
Well, yes, although if you listen carefully there are some elements of pea-soup hi-hat in there. After that I parted ways with Stigwood, although I was stuck in limbo for two years – the old story of the record company saying, we don't want to work with you, but we're not going to let you work for anybody else! It was contractual, evil things.

***Jack Bruce And Friends Live* is also previously unreleased.**
I'd forgotten all about that show being recorded. I think that was a pretty good example of that band. It's very good playing, but obviously soundwise it's a little different to what I would have preferred. But there's not much you can do about that.

**There's also the *Cream At The BBC* CD.**
The BBC guys were great. With the limited equipment they had – and the people at the



"The Fender VI wasn't really a very playable instrument."

© David Redfern/Redferns/Getty

Quite possibly the greatest power trio of them all, Cream, pictured in 1967: Clapton, Bruce and an atypically cheerful Baker.

© Icon and Image/Getty

Beeb were even more limited than most people! – they got a tremendously good sound, I think. They were only allowed to use a certain amount of recorded music, so you had to play live.

**There are interviews with Eric Clapton on there, but none by you.**
Well, I guess in those days Eric was the spokesman. It was like that, wasn't it? They didn't want us rowdy lot, it was all contrived and controlled. At that time Eric was the face of the band. I don't mind.

**You attended 14 different schools as a child. One of them was the Royal Scottish Academy of Music, where you had won a scholarship for cello and composition. But you left, reportedly because you were discouraged by the professors' lack of interest in your ideas.**
Well, yes. That sounds a bit arrogant, but then you are at that age. I got that scholarship when I was very young, I was 16, I think. I was still at school and going to the Academy part-time. Some of it was great: I mean, the first harmony teacher was really good, but he was a complete Bach freak and he spent all his time looking for mistakes in Bach, like doubled major thirds and tritones and everything. And that was his life! Apart from that he liked to tap-dance on the bass pedals of the organ, so I wasn't really learning a lot. Plus I'd discovered money and girls – more important things. Basically I was really interested in jazz, and they were so against it. Charles Mingus was a big influence, as obviously he was a bass player and a great composer. There were these practice rooms with really nice upright Steinway pianos, and I used to spend hours improvising, but they'd come in and tell me to stop. I played a Modern Jazz Quartet EP to this guy at the Academy and he just sneered at it, you know.

## "I think drummers like to play with me because I make them sound good. That is the function of the bass player"

**The classical training you received there must have been useful, though.**
It was in the early days. It's nice to be able to write things. All those early songs are written down – even things like Cream's 'White Room' were actually scored.

**Did other bass players influence you?**
Yes, very much so, like Mingus and Charlie Haden. I saw Ray Brown very early on, although he wasn't an influence. Percy Heath was the first bass player I saw live.

**In 1962 you joined Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated, with Charlie Watts on drums. I assume you and he made a good rhythm section?**
Oh yes, it was. I always liked Charlie's playing. He hadn't quite found his thing yet. He loves jazz, he worships it in a way, and I think he's what you might call a gentleman drummer. He's got a lovely backbeat. I think drummers like to play with me because I make them sound good. That is the function of the bass player. I remember going to a clinic that Billy Cobham was doing and someone asked him who his favourite bass player was. He didn't know I was there, but he actually said 'Jack Bruce'. I think the reason he gave was the rhythmic approach and the harmonic approach that I had picked things up in the right way.

**When did you switch from upright to electric bass?**
In about 1963, '64. I always played upright with Alexis Korner. I got asked to do this Ernest Ranglin session and they said, we want bass guitar. So I borrowed one. It was an Epiphone semi-acoustic with black nylon strings, but for me it was great. I suddenly realised that I could play louder than the drums, so I immediately switched.

**You left your next band, the Graham Bond Organisation, after three years because Ginger Baker said your playing was too busy. How did you feel about that at the time?**
I almost gave up. I was very hurt by the whole thing. I thought I was doing some interesting things. But I was getting a lot of criticism, not just from Ginger but from a lot of areas, for this melodic, so-called 'busy' approach, instead of playing four in the bar or something. I was influenced by James Jamerson, for instance – people like that.

**What was it you liked about Jamerson's playing?**
Everything – the way he was playing melodies rather than just root notes. That kind of polyphonic idea appealed to me on the bass, as opposed to just a supporting role.

**I bet Ginger changed his tune as the years went by.**
I don't know if he ever did, really. He probably still thinks I should be standing there going thump, thump.

**Was there generally a view back then that melodic bass was intrusive?**
Well, there weren't many people doing what I was trying to do. It just hadn't happened yet, so it was down to people like me to make it happen.

> "There weren't many people doing what I was trying to do. It was down to me to make it happen"

**You turned down Marvin Gaye's offer to join his band in America because you were about to get married. Do you ever wonder what it would have been like to play with Marvin?**
Of course. I wonder what might have happened, because much later on I became good friends with Jamerson. Marvin was very encouraging to me, to continue finding this style. But then, of course, Cream wouldn't have happened, and that was my great opportunity for me to play too many notes and get away with it!

**Was it only with Cream that you were allowed to express yourself on the bass as much as you wanted?**
Well, I was always doing that, really. Obviously with Cream we were able to do that because it was a jamming-type band. Cream was like a jazz band, but we didn't tell Eric that… we were like a little free-jazz trio with Eric as Ornette Coleman, but without him knowing it.

**You sometimes played a Fender VI.**
Yes. I started playing that with Graham Bond, because when John McLaughlin left it meant that I could do little guitar-type solos and stuff. It wasn't really a very playable instrument because the strings were very close together for a bass, and the scale was too big for a guitarist. It was

Jazz on a Danelectro Longhorn, 1967.

© Don Paulsen/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty

a kind of hybrid. I enjoyed it for a while, it was fun.

**What were your first impressions of Eric Clapton's playing?**

He was so obviously ahead of everybody else at that time, with his approach and his knowledge of the blues. I also played with him briefly in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers – he was just leaving when I joined. He was just going on his famous world tour, but he only made it as far as Greece and came back after he saw some meat hanging up with flies on it... That's the story, anyway.

**You also played with Jimi Hendrix very early on in his career.**

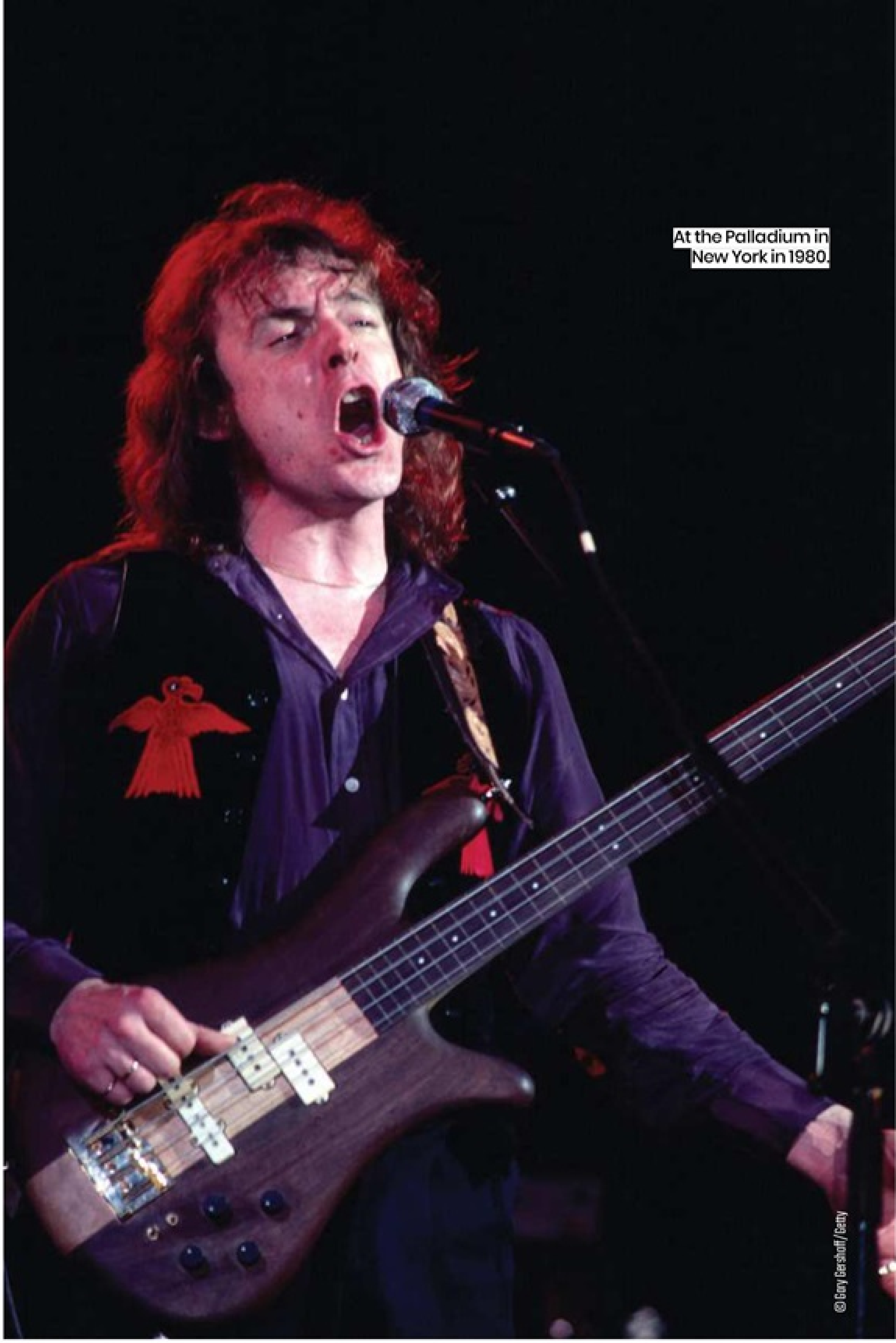
More than that, I was the first guy to bring Jimi on stage. We'd heard of him through a friend who had claimed to have seen him play in New York. Cream was playing at – I think – St. Martin's School Of Art, and I was having a pre-gig pint. This guy came up and said, 'Hi, I'm Jimi Hendrix, can I sit in with your band?' And I said, 'Well, I dunno, let's go and find out'. So we went across the road and Eric was very keen for him to play and Ginger, of course, was completely against it. But he did play, and he blew us all away, playing with his teeth and all that. Eric was stunned. There's a demo that we did the next day, and you can tell in Eric's playing that he's trying to emulate some of that stuff.

**You talked with Hendrix about forming a band together. How close did this come to reality?**

That was actually going to happen. Jimi was all for having a play. At that point he was trying to find a new direction, musically, and that could easily have been it. I was all for it because I think one of the problems Jimi had was that he didn't play with people who kicked him up the arse, basically. I'm not knocking Mitch Mitchell, but to me he was like a British jazz player, he was kind of laid-back. He played a lot of rhythms but I don't think it pushed Jimi in the way that we would have.

**At their peak, which was the better trio – Cream or the Jimi Hendrix Experience?**

Certainly I would say that Cream were a more interesting band, although obviously we didn't have Jimi. But I would say that Eric was a better guitar player. Obviously Jimi was Jimi, and he could have played the Indian nose flute and it wouldn't have mattered, because he was playing himself – I think he regarded the guitar as an extension of himself. But in an instrumental sense, I would argue that Eric was at least as good as Jimi, probably better. I think Cream had something quite magical as a band when we were playing live.


At the Palladium in New York in 1980.

© Gary Gershoff/Getty

**You described being in Lifetime, with John McLaughlin, as the musical time of your life. Why is that?**

It was the most challenging music, which I really enjoy. For instance, on one tune I'd be playing in E and singing in C, plus there were quite difficult things like polytonalities and so on, and it was rhythmically very advanced. So when that band gelled, there was nothing like it. People who saw it still tell me that. It was like Cream, but down the road a bit.

**From *Songs For A Tailor* onwards, you've combined rock, jazz and classical styles in your music, plus what we would call world music. Do you compose with a particular style in mind, or does it come out more organically?**

It just happens. The second album was written in one afternoon. The early ones were written almost as song cycles, although I hate to use these pretentious words. They were written in the order they came out on the record.

**Are you more of a rock player than, say, a jazz player?**

Yes, if you have to put labels on it, although I think I've managed to come up with a style of my own. My own thing, as it were. But since the Fifties, when rock'n'roll and R&B started to influence things, I think you've been able to forge your own style.

Especially if you play the music that you write, you're not constrained by other people's writing.

**I noticed you'll be 60 this year.**
Aaagh! So did I. But I don't think musicians ever really retire. You just fall off your perch.

**Far from slowing down, your career seems to have accelerated in the last few years.**
Yes. I had some time off a while back and just thought, oh, I might as well do some work while I can. I'm not touring so much this year, I'm finishing off my new record and then I've got some things later on.

**Is BBM finished now or is there any likelihood of a reunion?**
I think it would be a BM-something else! One of the Bs might not be there next time. That was a great band, but there were some problems with one of the Bs... I speak to Gary Moore a lot. The last thing we did was the *Remembering John Lee Hooker* record, which was fun. We're always talking about doing an album together.

**Are you still playing fretless Warwicks?**
Yes, but more and more I'm using this old Gibson EB-1. God knows how old it is, I think it's from the Fifties. It's got this big, old-fashioned, woofy sound. I use that a little bit more, but my first love is still the Warwick fretless and I've got loads of those. I do like them, it's just that when I'm playing songs like 'With A Little Help From My Friends' with Ringo Starr, it doesn't sound quite right on a fretless. So the EB-1 is more of that period, plus it's violin-shaped.

**Didn't you suggest the extended upper horn to Warwick when they were designing the Thumb bass?**
Yes, because the balance was terrible. I bought one and I thought it was promising, so I helped them out. Normally I go for the bubinga and wenge woods and MEC pickups.

At the peak of his powers in 1989.

© Graham Tucker/Redferns/Getty

**Are you a five- and six-string bassist?**
Well, I've still got a Fender VI which they gave me, and a couple of five-string fretlesses, but I just don't really see the point of a six-string for me. I like four strings: the limitations make you come up with ideas. If you've got all those notes, you can just play them. Obviously I'll use a five-string if I want to tune down and go to a low C or something.

**Of all the basses you've ever owned, what was your favourite?**
I'm not a big collector, but I've got what is supposedly the eighth Fender bass ever made, with the Telecaster headstock. It has 0008 on it. It's on my wall, and I occasionally play it, but I wouldn't take it on the road or anything. It looks great, it's got the original pickup. I've also got a really nice plexiglas fretless that Dan Armstrong made for me. I think there's only one other, and Paul McCartney's got it. But I think the Warwick Thumb that I've had for 10 years is my favourite, as well as the EB-3 that I played with Cream, which has a very thin, wide neck, the way I like it.

**What about amps?**
I use the Hartke stuff, I've been using those for years. I used to work with those guys too, to help them come up with idea of valves and transistors in the same setup. At the time I was using two amps, so we worked on making that happen.

**Do you prefer a clean sound or do you like a bit of overdrive?**
Well, the way I play the distortion comes from the fingers anyway. But I like the amps to be clean. In the old days, that wasn't possible above a certain volume, although now I don't play as loud as I used to.

**Any effects?**
No, I don't use anything. When I'm recording I don't even use an amp, I just stick it straight in. The tone controls are pretty flat too. I think pedals for bass just get in the way of the sound, although in the Seventies I went through a period of using different things – choruses, phasers and so on. I had this one amazing little effects thing called an Effectron Junior, like a little digital delay thing. You could play a chord and then just stand twiddling knobs for five minutes and that was the solo!

**Did you ever play slap bass?**
No, I never thought it was for me. I kind of fooled around with it but I just thought, it's not me. I'm glad I didn't get into it. I remember in the Eighties it was the done thing and everybody was doing it. There were a few good people like Larry Graham and Mark King. I liked the way Mark was doing it, but not all those people who did it just because you had to do it. It never struck me as being that great.

"I like four strings: the limitations make you come up with ideas."

© Paul Bergen/Redferns/Getty

## "I've got a lot of time for Flea and his backflips. He does them better than me"

**What current music are you listening to?**
My kids introduced me to gangsta rap, so I'm pretty up on that. Missy Elliott does a lot for me, she's a poet. I used to like Cypress Hill a lot, I thought they were fantastic. I thought they were like the Beatles, they had all that musicality and all that humour. Anything original and not too serious, I like.

**I'd like to hear your thoughts on John Entwistle.**
He was great. Loud! Very loud. He was an unusual sort of a player, he had his own thing going.

**Bootsy Collins?**
He's a great guy, he's a lot of fun.

**Jaco Pastorius?**
I knew him a little bit, as much as anybody could at that point. It was towards the end when I knew him, and he was in a bit of a state. The sound that he had, you watch a TV show now and there's loads of guys doing it.

**Flea?**
I've got a lot of time for him, especially his backflips. He does them better than me.

*Info: www.jackbruce.com*

# SISTER SIX

Session bassist **Joela Bassista** reveals the tools of her trade, and the inspirations who guided her into the low end.

© Collin Oliver, Dress BOAB Luxury

"I actually played guitar first, but one day the bass player at my old church had left, so I just went and picked it up and started playing along with the music that was playing in the sanctuary. I fell in love and have been playing ever since. I picked up the double bass in junior college. Shout to my late mother Romene who inspired me to practise every day. I'm currently playing with a new, all-female band called the Divas Of Jazz."

"My first bass was a blue four-string Ibanez that I bought off a friend in college, shout out to him. My current bass guitar is a white Yamaha TRBX305 – I love it because the neck isn't too wide. I also love that I can go between different tones just by flipping the switch on the bass. The amp I'm using is the bold, sturdy, and faithful Fender Rumble 500 2x10 combo. The sound quality is stellar, but what really sold me is how light it is for a 500-watt amp. I also just got a Zoom B1 pedal and I'm still learning about it – a great pedal that's budget friendly."

"The best advice I've ever gotten about bass was to stay in the pocket. Groove and feel are so important to every song, and it is part of my job to establish that.

**"I didn't know about female musicians making it out in this world until my high school band director showed me Esperanza Spalding. I hope to meet her one day to tell her how much she inspires me"**

"The two bass players that really helped form my style of playing, and who inspire me in general, are Esperanza Spalding and Derrick Hodge. I learned about Esperanza through my high-school band director after talking to him about what I wanted to do when I graduated. At the time I didn't know about female musicians making it out in this world, and then he showed her to me and I fell in love! I hope to meet her one day to tell her what she has done for me and how much she inspires me. I learned about Derrick Hodge through one of my favourite bands, Robert Glasper Experiment. He plays with such grace, and his note choices are always so tasteful, so he has definitely been a huge influence on my playing."

***Instagram: jojobassista***

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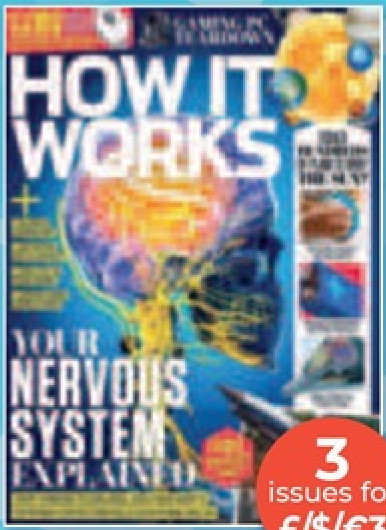


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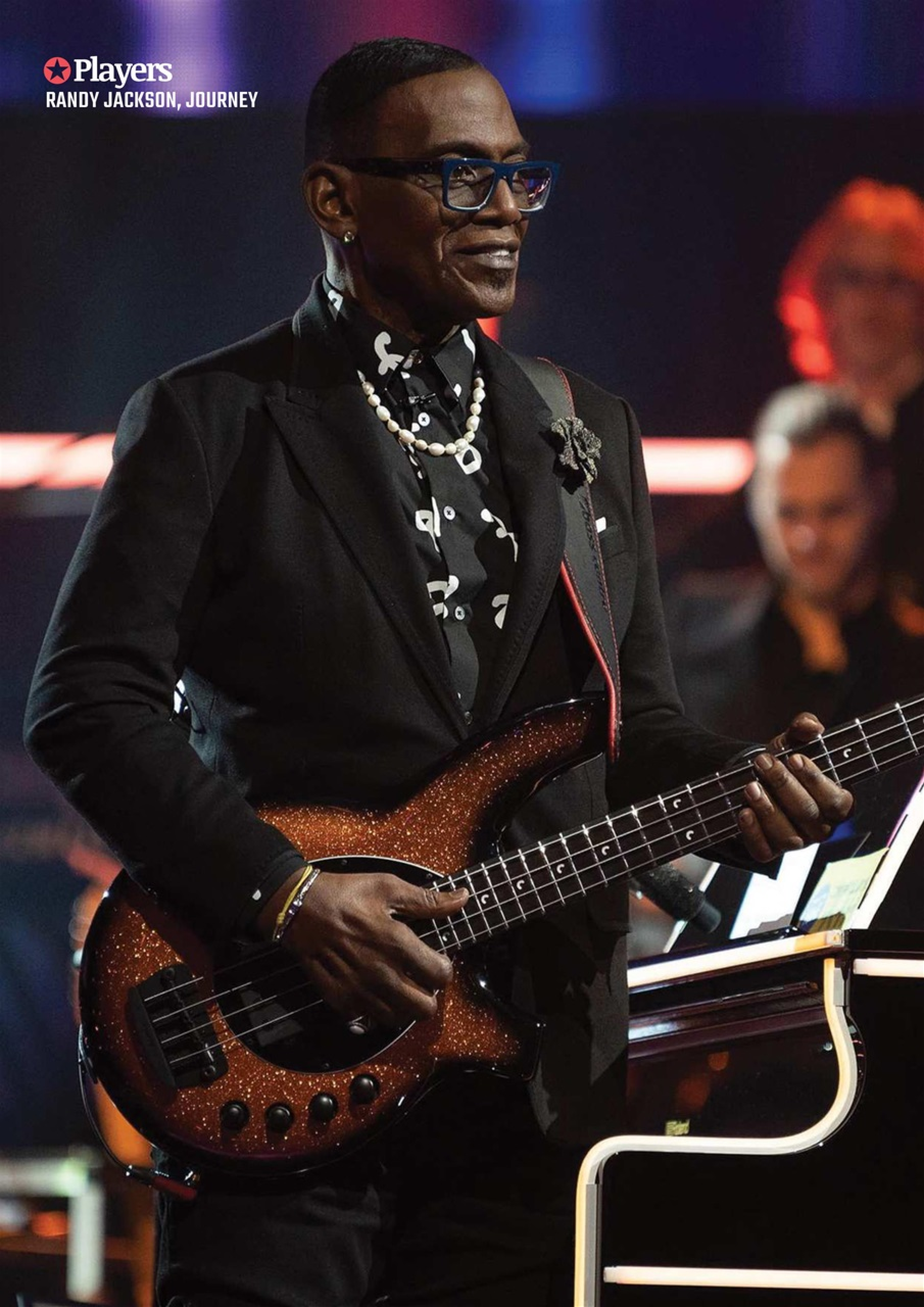


# JOURNEY MAN

Stadium-rock perennials Journey are back with a new album made with the returning **Randy Jackson**, whose story goes far beyond merely playing bass. An A&R man, unwilling TV star, producer and entrepreneur, Jackson is renowned in our world for his vast resume of sessions – but to 40 million TV viewers, he's better known as the man who sat next to Simon Cowell on *American Idol*.

**Interview:** Joel McIver **Photography:** Getty

Randy Jackson, born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1956, doesn't have the usual bass-player biography. A fusion bassist from his twenties, having got his start with the French jazz violinist Jean-Luc Ponty, he found fame with the AOR giants Journey in 1986. This kickstarted a long and prolific session career, whether playing pop hits with artists such as Whitney Houston or complex jazz with Billy Cobham, and he soon expanded his role to production, artist management and then A&R, where he was a stalwart for many years at Columbia and MCA.

That's a successful music-industry career by anyone's standards, but Jackson's appearances as a judge and artist mentor on *American Idol* on Fox from 2002 until 2014 made him nothing less than a household name. Now that TV talent shows of this nature have receded from view a little, it's easy to forget just how massive they were a decade ago: at its peak, say from 2004 to 2010, *American Idol* was ranked at the top of the annual US television ratings. It created dozens of new musical stars, the best-known among them being Kelly Clarkson, Carrie Underwood and Queen's Adam Lambert, mentored by Jackson and his fellow judges Simon Cowell, Paula Abdul, Keith Urban, Jennifer Lopez and others.

Many a musician despises the *American Idol* format, though – and to his credit, when Jackson talks to us today about Journey's new album *Freedom*, he paints a balanced picture of the show. And if you're looking for bass stories that will blow your mind, look no further: this man has seen and done it all.

**I really enjoyed *Freedom*, Randy. There's tons of cool bass all over it.**
Thanks, man. It was fun. It was a little bit challenging to make during the pandemic, but we did it. I worked at NRG Studios in North Hollywood for part of it, and at my own studio here. It was wild at times, not being in the same room. Jonathan [Cain, keyboards] was in Florida and Arnel [Pineda, vocals] was in Manila, but we did it.

**It doesn't sound any different to a traditional, studio-recorded album to me.**
That's because we know each other so well, and we've played together a lot over the years. At a certain age and after a certain amount of development and experience, you all know what it is and where it's going. Also, we all chimed in on writing and co-writing, so we all knew what the intention was, you know what I mean?

**I do, but didn't you miss that moment when you look at the drummer and they look at you, and you know you're both going to play something at the end of the bar?**
Oh, I know. I do this anyway, but on this album I played the songs a ton of times over and over in seven different ways, because I was trying to imagine being in a room and getting that feeling.

**If the technology existed so that you could work remotely and the timing would be perfect, with no delay, it would be fine.**
There's companies coming out with that stuff. One of them is called Sessionwire, and they're doing some cool stuff that I'm involved with. It sounds cool, and it's almost close enough to be really workable.

**The company that cracks that is going to make a fortune.**

I know! Let's dive in with *Bass Player*. We should be on board with the new Elon Musk.

**What was the gear that you used on the album?**
A four-string Bongo by Music Man, a custom shop Fender Jazz, and a Sadowsky on a couple of songs. I used Ampeg SVTs for a lot of it, a Kemper for most of it, a SansAmp for all of it. Some pick, some fingers, Ernie Ball strings. I was trying to create that sort of Jack Bruce, John Entwistle, John Paul Jones feel, almost like the Acoustic 360 amp that had the fuzz and the tuner in it.

**Does your custom Jazz have different spec?**
Yeah. I still own quite a few older Fenders, but I'm that guy who doesn't like passive. I love active, so I'm the newfangled guy who wants to be able to dial in what I want to dial in, and dial in how much of it I want. I want to be able to oversaturate and overdrive and do what I want to do and have various basses give me three or four or five different tones. You can't do that with passive, but if you've got a Kemper, you've got everything you need right there.

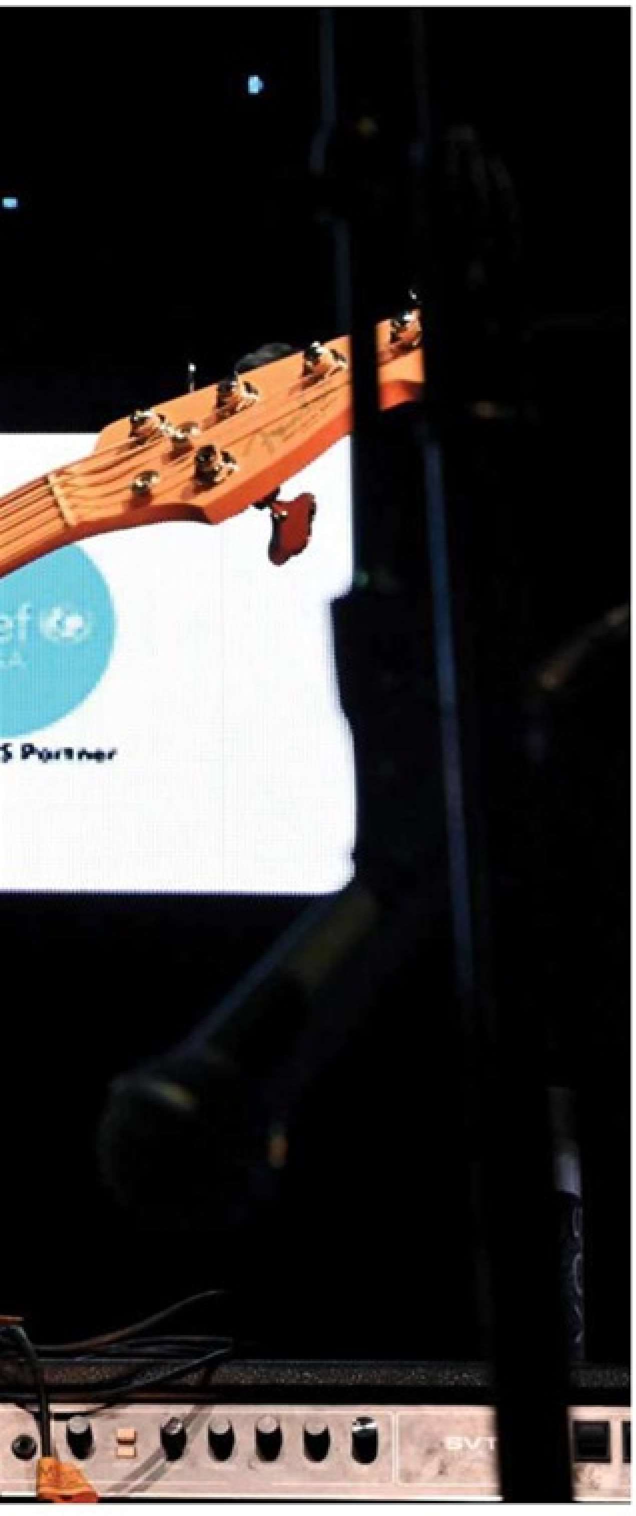
**On the recent single, 'You Got The Best Of Me', you do a load of upper-register stuff at the back end of the song that I really liked.**
Yeah, that's where the Kemper came in handy, but I think you gotta always start with a great tone. As Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown – the old bluesman I used to play with when I was a kid – used to tell me, the tone is in your hands.

**How old were you when you got started as a bass player?**
I was 14. My brother had a band in my mom's garage in lovely Louisiana. He was a drummer. In the neighbourhood where I grew up, we had what were known as block parties, with a local band in the neighbourhood practising on the front porch of one of the bandmembers' homes. People would gather around, and the ice-cream truck would come. I just fell in love with the bass, and I had a great first teacher, this guy Sammy Thornton. God rest his soul. He was a brilliant guy from Baton Rouge, and he was very old-school – very James Jamerson and

Leading the Randy Jackson All Star Band in 2019.

Chuck Rainey. I got good beginnings, at a great time, from a master.

**What was your first bass?**
It was a Kingston, and I loved that bass, man – it was great. Then I had a Sears bass. I used to play upright a lot when I was in high school, too. There were so many great bass players around at the time – Jamerson, John Paul Jones, McCartney and Chuck Rainey of course, but also Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, Miroslav Vitous, Alphonso Johnson, Anthony Jackson, Marcus Miller, Nate Watts, all those guys that came up at the time. Also, Leon Sylvers – my God, that guy was so dope. He played a Rickenbacker 4001 with Shalamar, he was brilliant. Bootsy Collins, oh my God. Him and Larry Graham, they



just leave you speechless. But you know, there's some incredible bass players today. Victor Wooten is amazing. I love Mohini Dey, I love Mononeon. My friend Hadrien Feraud is brilliant, too, and so is Pino Palladino. So many great, great players.

**These days, do you define yourself primarily as a bass player, as a record company executive, as a TV personality, or something else?**
Well, that's funny. I started just as a musician, and later on, I went into the label side doing A&R, and then I went into TV. So I would call myself a creative professional – or a business-minded creative would be a better way to put it, I guess, or a creative entrepreneur. In the early days I was just trying to master my craft, which would give me the licence to play with any of the amazing, unbelievable talents that I played with, like Jean-Luc Ponty, like John McLaughlin, like Narada Michael Walden – these giant players. I mean, John McLaughlin is like a god. One of my main mentors was John Coltrane, so I always imagined being able to circular-breathe on the bass, like he did on the saxophone. Well, that's kind of what John McLaughlin did on the guitar. It's really hard to play like that, which is why they're still teaching 'Giant Steps' in school. They'll be teaching it until the cows come home.

**What would circular breathing-influenced bass playing feel like?**
It's very hard. It's being able to play at your highest level, melodically and rhythmically, without stopping. It's still a work in progress.

**What is your philosophy when it comes to good bass playing?**
Once you have your sound, do you listen? And do you use your facility wisely? Because if you don't, and all you're doing is showing off, you're not listening. You're only listening to yourself, which makes you a terrible ensemble player. I've spent a lot of time putting bands together for tours, and I would always notice which musicians were actually listening. If you're just playing and trying to show off, that's not going to do anybody any good.

**Did you go through that phase yourself?**
Of course. I think all young players do. I tried to play a billion notes a second, and then somebody said to me, 'Are you feeling any of those notes that you're playing?' I was like, 'Damn, dude, I just got hit hard'. I had to sit there thinking about it in front of a bunch of people. It took me aback, but I was like, 'You know what? He's right. It's good advice'. I grew up loving songs, and for me, in order to love songs, you have to listen to them and hear them – like absorb them, and really digest them, and ask 'What is the meaning of the lyric? What is the intention of that bass-line?'

**Which performers have impressed you most?**
James Brown, who I met a couple of times. This guy was a complete performance showman. That's where a lot of Prince and Michael Jackson's approach came from, which still makes them two of the greatest, but James made it look effortless. He thought about every single detail. 'When I move left, or my hair moves or my hips move, how do I look? How do I stand if I'm gonna hold the mic? How am I gonna hold it? I'm gonna scream to the right and then to the left'. I mean, just unbelievable.

**We have a photo of you playing with members of the Grateful Dead in 1989.**
That was an amazing, crazy, wild band, with Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir, Carlos Santana, Joe Henderson, Wayne Shorter, Tony Williams and Chester Thompson. That was a wild band that was pretty unbelievably amazing. I didn't quite realise it at the time. But, you know, maybe some of those inebriants helped me not realise that at the time, ha ha!

**What was your stimulant of choice?**
Whatever the day felt like. What do we feel like today, what colour, what size, where should we go today? Wow.

**If someone who wasn't familiar with your work asked you to recommend one of your recordings, what would you suggest?**
You know, I've worked on so many types of records, from Whitney Houston and Madonna to fusion stuff. I loved doing 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' with Ronnie and Keith and Steve Jordan in 1986 [for the Whoopi Goldberg movie of the same name]. That was fun, because I love the Rolling Stones. And I love the blues, like Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram and Marcus King and my boy Eric Gales. I love the feels, and I love people that can give you the feels, along with the tone and the sound and the playability. Just playing the notes is not enough for me. Anybody can learn to play the notes, and anybody can learn to play fast – but can you play a line with feeling and real intention, so that it reaches out and touches somebody's soul? I want to make love to the soul, not the mind, like Jaco did.

**Did you ever cross paths with him?**
I crossed paths with him a bunch. I saw him with Wayne Cochran's CC Riders way back when – the blue-eyed soul band from the south. And then I had one of the greatest times of my life when I was playing with

Billy Cobham at the Roxy in LA in 1976 to '77. We played a show attended by my dear friend Chuck Rainey, who I got lessons from at one point in my life. Chuck brought along James Jamerson, Jaco Pastorius, Lenny White, John McLaughlin, Chick Corea, all the Toto boys. And they all came up and sat in! It was incredible, man, and then we all played touch football in the street. The day after, I went up to GIT, which had just started, with Jamerson, because he was doing a thing up there. I was just like 'Wow!' These guys were all my heroes.

**Fusion was a serious commercial force back then. Why was that?**

It had a much bigger audience than it does today, thanks to guys like Miles Davis and John McLaughlin, who played with Miles. Miles was the firestarter. He made jazz more commercial. He made it sexy. He wore cool clothing, and he was a rock star with electric records like *On The Corner*, which had two drummers and three bass players that were really pushing the envelope. That's what started making jazz cool. When you think about Alphonso Johnson and how he dressed, and Herbie Hancock at the time with Headhunters and Weather Report, it was very cool. Return To Forever was cool too. I'll also give massive credit to one of the greatest promoters ever, Billy Graham. As a kid in Louisiana, I went to see the Doobie Brothers at the Lakefront Marina in New Orleans, and the band opening for them was the Mahavishnu Orchestra. So to put this in perspective. I'm listening to 'Black Water' by the Doobie Brothers, and these guys come on before that playing 'Birds Of Fire', my God. My head was blown wide open. Think about that. You don't have that today. It would be like Snarky Puppy opening for Lil Wayne!

**Would you say you're playing bass at your best now?**

If you mean 'Am I playing with my best wisdom?' then yes, I would say that part is true. I listen a lot more now than I ever have. It's probably why I was a pretty good session player, because I think about what the song needs. I think 'Does it need me to do this now? What do I want to play? What's the tone, what's the sound, what's the part?'

**What's your approach to soloing?**

Listen to the melody. Think about what the music is, and think about what the idiom is. If you're in a funk band, a jazz solo might not work. You can use the whole-tone scale, but it may or may not work. You can use the Mixolydian minor, but that may not work either, so think accordingly. To really play the music, you've got to listen. I could teach a whole class on listening, with no instruments. I would tell the students, 'Just listen, and tell me what you've heard', because I find most people do not listen, or if they do, they only listen to themselves. They think, 'Okay, I'm learning to play the modes, and I can use this scale here, and I'll start with a harmonic minor' and I'll go 'No, you're not listening – you're thinking'.

**What's next for you?**

I've been working on a solo record for the last three months. A lot of my favourite players and singers are on it. I'm excited about it – I think you'll like it. There'll be some bass and guitar players that you'll know.

**Did you play bass on it too?**

One of the things I've adopted later on in life is that when I'm producing, a lot of the times I'll get somebody else to play bass, depending on what the music is, because I find it's hard to perform both roles at the same. It's kind of fun, you know, seeing how someone else would interpret a bass part, because their approach is always different.

**As a producer, do you prioritise the bass parts because you're a bass player yourself?**

No, I'm listening to the whole band. See, as a producer, you have to listen to everything, because you're trying to get a message out to someone. It can't just be about the bass. That's why I don't play bass when I'm producing. If I don't like what has been recorded, I'll go back later and replace it or add to it or whatever, but I'm trying to get the right perspective. What's the intention? What's the song supposed to say? And more importantly, what are you supposed to feel while you listen to it? Am I trying to make you dance? Am I trying to make you sad? Am I trying to make you hopeful? What am I trying to give you? Listen to Santana – how does that make you feel? Listen to Bartok or Beethoven or Bach or Prokofiev. What are they trying to give you? What am I supposed to get from Bootsy's Rubber Band? What's he trying to give me?

**Your career in A&R presumably gave you added perception as a producer.**

Yeah, because it forced me to understand more about what it means to become a successful songwriter and a successful producer. It forces you to have to view it from 30,000 feet and become truly objective. It's not about you. It's about the song.

**Is A&R a tough business?**

It's really hard, because everybody's got an

With No Doubt bassist Tony Kanal in LA in 2018.

With members of The Grateful Dead in 1989: "That was an amazing, crazy, wild band."

opinion, but is it the right opinion? Are you being honest with yourself? Are you being honest with the artist? Are you signing and developing the right artists? Is their music good, and what does good actually mean? Is it gonna sell? Is it going to make the company money? You know, there's a lot that goes into it, because anybody can just make music. That's actually part of the problem today. One of the downsides of social media and YouTube and all this stuff is that there's no arbiter of tastes, so you have to weed through a lot of garbage to find the good shit.

**Well, that leads me to *American Idol*. A lot of people don't trust music from TV talent shows. Are they wrong to feel that way?**
Yeah. They just don't realise what *American Idol* was about. See, Simon Cowell and I were both A&R guys at the time of being judges on *Idol*. We weren't stars, we were just A&R guys. Our day job was about finding and developing talent and making it happen, and what was *American Idol* about? It was a show about finding and developing talent and making it happen. Basically, it was a glorified A&R show. It gave us marketing, it gave us research, and we would take somebody that you didn't know, and they would leave the show with 10 million people as their audience. When we put their record out, we could go to 10 or 15 percent of that audience to market and sell to, so now a nobody has a million and a half people that actually give a shit. Look at Kelly Clarkson, who's talented and sold seven million copies: 40 million people voted for her. Now, if 40 million people knew about Mohini Dey and voted for her, that would be a different conversation. So *American Idol* was really a marketing tool, although the public will never see that.

**That makes sense.**
Yeah. We saw that it was becoming hard at that time to break new artists. I was at MCA Records, and you could put Blink-182, Mary J. Blige or whoever on any TV show – *Letterman*, *Carson*, *Leno* – and you'd spend a bunch of money doing it, just to sell another 10,000 records. We saw all that dwindling at the time, so our question was, how do you bring a new artist out? That's what it was really about.

**In 2022, has the talent-show format been replaced by YouTube or TikTok or one of those platforms?**
TikTok has definitely helped a bit, but as I said, the real issue is that there's no arbiter of taste. So on TikTok, you gotta listen to 20,000 horrible singers to hear one good one. At least on TV talent shows, you may only have to hear 500 bad ones to get to the good ones. It's the same thing with YouTube. Nobody's saying 'Don't put that song out'. You and I could be in a pub right now, and everybody in the pub could release 10 songs. Forget the talent level. That's the problem.

**Having been known as a musician beforehand, how did it feel to make the transition to being a household name when *American Idol* got popular?**
It was a little weird. I'd be queued up at a store, and people would walk up and start talking to me like I was their best friend. I'd think, 'I don't even know you', but they'd talk for hours, asking me 'What do you think about so and so?' But we were in people's homes twice a week, so I understood it.

**You don't miss the show?**
Well, now I'm on *Name That Tune*, which is like an old-school game show. I don't miss judging artists, because I did it for so long. But we're developing another show along those lines, and I think it's the next new wrinkle. It's a music show, but it's a little bit different – I think people will dig it.

***Freedom* is out now.**
***Info: www.journeymusic.com, @yo_randyjackson***

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# GEAR Reviews

## Welcome to our expert road-tests of state-of-the-art bass gear

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass cabs and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's useful for bassists, but generally speaking, this zone is reserved for bass-specific gear.

We take our reviews seriously. *BP* is the last English-language print magazine devoted solely to bass in the world, and we have readers all over the planet, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your time, we'll say so; if it's flawed, we'll make that clear. We're not answerable to advertisers in any way, and our tests are independent of the views of musicians, manufacturers and distributors.

Let us know what you think of our conclusions. Did we get it right?
**Joel McIver, Editor**

### Reviewed this month...

**48**
**GIBSON**
**GENE SIMMONS G2 THUNDERBIRD**
£2499, www.gibson.com

**52**
**GALLIEN-KRUEGER**
**FUSION 800S AND NEO-IV 410 CAB**
£1099, £1249, www.andertons.co.uk

**56**
**LUNA GUITARS**
**TRIBAL**
£300 approx, www.lunaguitars.com

# GIBSON

# Gene Simmons G2 Thunderbird

## Shout it out loud! Amit Sharma deuces with the Kiss Demon's new Gibson

**GIBSON**
www.gibson.com

£2499

Gene Simmons has played all sorts of instruments over the years, from the Charlie LoBue custom bass heard on the early Kiss albums to his own Punisher and Axe signatures, although for a while in the mid-Seventies Simmons did experiment with Gibson Grabbers and Rippers. Last year's news that he was launching his own G2 brand – pronounced 'G squared' – through the American giants nevertheless came as a surprise, the new collaboration pledging to release a whole range of guitars and basses built with the Demon's personal seal of approval.

### Build Quality

On first glance, this debut in the series – not in the form of a Grabber or Ripper, but a Thunderbird, interestingly – is certainly impressive. The contrast between the ebony nitrocellulose lacquer finish against the mirrorplex pickguard and truss-rod cover is eye-catching, treading the fine line between modern edge and classic finesse. As well as the pearloid reverse split diamond inlays, it's also nice to see the Gibson logo on the front of the headstock, with the G2 logo on the back side near the nut – a reassuring consideration given this instrument's price.

The laser-engraved skull logo on the pickguard may not be to everyone's taste, so you'll either love it or hate it, though it does tie in with the rock'n'roll aesthetic associated with Kiss and therefore has its merits. More importantly, however, this feels like a real Thunderbird – and being handmade in the USA, it very much is one, with an incredibly resonant mahogany body that rings loud acoustically before you've even plugged it in.

Once you do, the ceramic magnets in the Rhythm and Lead T-Bird humbuckers pack a powerful and immediate response, with no shortage of punch and depth, making for a bass that sounds, much like the American group's landmark 1975 release, truly alive. Unlike the EMG PJ set typically found in Simmons' Punisher and Axe, however, these high-output humbuckers aren't active, so there's no need to worry about battery power. The two volume controls allow for a blend of either or both pickups, with the rhythm unit alone bringing a wonderfully articulate sound that has enough brightness to retain definition and clarity. More highs can then be cut using the master tone knob, allowing for softer, jazzier tones when dialled in clean – a nice option to have, even if Simmons himself tends not to go there.

The ceramic magnets in the Rhythm and Lead T-Bird humbuckers pack a powerful and immediate response, with no shortage of punch and depth

**The laser-engraved skull logo on the pickguard may not be to everyone's taste, so you'll either love it or hate it, though it does tie in with the rock'n'roll aesthetic**

**GIBSON**
www.gibson.com

## Sounds And Playability

Switching to just the bridge pickup, there's a huge shift in the midrange and a noticeable drop in the low end that's perfect for chords or riffs that need less sonic boom and more snarl, such as Simmons' opening lines to 'Love Gun' and 'Shout It Out Loud', played higher up the neck on the first string. Together the two pickups complement each other very well indeed, with serious weight and bite that can be easily tamed through the respective volume controls. They cover the classic Kiss tones, from the walking lines of 'Strutter' through to heavier hits like 'Creatures Of The Night' and beyond. Add in a healthy dose of compression or overdrive, as well as some heavily repeating delays, and it's hard not to picture a possessed Simmons spitting out blood in front of you, screaming 'Oh yeah!' before attacking that open low note in 'God Of Thunder'.

Like the best signature models, this is an instrument that ultimately inspires you to sound and play like the musician behind it, while also being capable of a lot more, from Motown to country, and with the right kind of EQ scoop and compression, even slapped funk – even if it's not aimed at such musicians. Every manufacturer will tell you that they try to ensure their guitars feel playable, but greater care needs to be taken with larger-bodied instruments like this Thunderbird, or they can end up feeling bulky and demanding. Gibson haven't let themselves down here at all, with this review model feeling lighter than it looks.

It also arrives with a low enough action for more technically ambitious styles of playing, as well as basic root-noted rock, making bends, stretches and hammer-ons more comfortable than expected. Tuning stability and intonation also feel impeccable: this is definitely a 'set and forget' kind of bass that allows the player to focus on their performance, undistracted and with confidence.

## Conclusion

All in all, this first offering from G2 delivers on virtually every front, from the dazzling black diamond aesthetic through to playability and versatility. Perhaps most importantly of all, it's a bass that's tailor-made for conjuring this larger-than-life character's earth-conquering tones. He is the God Of Thunder, after all.

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

**Price** | £2499
**Made In** | USA
**Body** | Mahogany
**Neck** | Mahogany, 34" scale
**Neck Join** | Set neck
**Fingerboard** | Ebony, 20 frets
**Pickup** | Rhythm (neck), Lead (bridge)
**Controls** | 2 x Volume, Master Tone
**Hardware** | Hipshot bridge and tuners
**Weight** 9 lbs / 4 kg (approx)
**Left-hand available?** No
**Case/gigbag supplied?** Yes

## WHAT WE THINK

**Plus** | Great playability, impeccable tones, surprisingly versatile
**Minus** | The Kiss aesthetic won't appeal to non-fans, and it's expensive
**Overall** | There's a lot to like about this costly Thunderbird, from its searing hot tones to that striking mirror-on-black aesthetic

## BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★☆
SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★☆
VALUE
★★★★★★★★☆☆

# GALLIEN-KRUEGER Fusion 800S and NEO-IV 410 cab

## Can a lightweight rig have a heavyweight sound? Kevin Johnson weighs in

**ANDERTONS**
www.andertons.co.uk

**£1099**
**£1249**

In the eternal struggle of getting killer tone versus breaking your back to make the gig, hybrid amps have been turning the tides of war. One of Gallien-Krueger's latest pieces of artillery is the Fusion 800S head, which brings together the best of both worlds with a preamp featuring three 12AX7 tubes matched to an 800-watt Class D power section. Yours truly was lucky enough to get my mitts on the Fusion 800S and their NEO IV 410 cabinet. There's plenty to go over – so enough bragging, and let's dig in!

### Build Quality

The head is built with an all-aluminium body that is anodised with laser-etched graphics. The cab, while looking like a tank with its tough coating and metal grille, weighs a mere 63 pounds (29 kilos). Its form and spring-loaded handles make it about as easy to lift as can be expected.

With 10 knobs that all have secondary push functions, this amp might seem a little daunting for some players. It is just a little beyond "plug and play" status, but the control set is much more intuitive than it lets on.

Firstly, an important distinction from most bass amps is the Trim knob, which is not to be confused with gain. Many amps have a -10db pad in order to match up hot or active basses with the amp's input: Trim lets you set the input level to precisely match the output level from your bass. As such, this knob is to be set fully clockwise and then dialled back only when it blinks red to indicate clipping. This is extremely important, as it will affect how your signal hits the rest of the gain staging.

From there, the rotary function of each knob is fairly straightforward. Normal is the normal channel's volume level, Overdrive sets the amount of overdrive, Edge is the high-frequency response of the overdrive channel, Level sets the overdrive channel's volume. After that there's a four-band EQ followed by the master volume.

The pushbutton functions of each knob engage settings, rather than a whole other parameter to adjust. This begins with pushing the Trim knob to activate the Voice filter, which revoices the amp's sound for a more aggressive tone. As such, I found this to be the "instant G-K tone" button. Pushing the Normal or Overdrive buttons switches to that channel, while the next two pushbuttons, Cut and Body, are filters

Engaging the Bump filter adds gut-rumbling lows: an extra-girthy sound that will fill out even the deadest of rooms

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

**Gallien-Krueger Fusion 800S**
**Price** | £1099
**Made in** | USA
**Power** | 800 watts
**Features** | Tube preamp with three 12AX7s, four-band EQ, footswitchable tube overdrive with tone control (footswitch included), Voicing filters (Voice, Bump, Contour, Presence), balanced XLR output with Pre and Post EQ, unbalanced 1/4" send and return, Aux input, headphones output, twist-lock speaker outputs, switchable impedance (2, 2.7, 4, 8 ohms)
**Weight** | 5.5 lbs / 2.5 kg

**Gallien-Krueger NEO-IV 410**
**Price** | £1249
**Made in** | USA
**Power** | 1000 watts
**Features** | 4 x G-K-manufactured neodymium 10" woofers, Paragon horn, 1" P-Audio high-frequency compression driver, response 40 Hz to 18 kHz
**Weight** | 63 lbs / 29 kg

**BP RATING**
BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★★★★★★
VALUE
★★★★★★★★☆☆

**ANDERTONS**
www.andertons.co.uk

to sculpt the drive channel highs and lows. Next are Bump (a low-end enhancement), Contour (a mid-scoop), Hi-Cut (uh… a high cut), and Presence (a high boost). Finally, the Master volume doubles as a mute switch. Each setting is displayed by a white light on the knob, turning to a pleasant hue of blue for a quick visual check of your settings.

The rear of the Fusion 800S is similarly loaded with all the features you'd expect: a DI, a headphone output, an auxiliary input, a footswitch jack, a tuner out, an effects loop, and dual twist lock speaker outs. There's also a handy switch for setting the impedance to match your cab setup between 2 ohms, 2.7, 4 or 8 ohms. Each setting dishes out 800 watts, but connecting a single 8 ohm cab will reduce it to 400 watts.

## Sounds

The head and cab may be lightweight, but the sound is not: this rig delivers the huge, clear tone for which G-K is known. Engaging the Bump filter adds gut-rumbling lows: an extra-girthy sound that will fill out even the deadest of rooms. Although the G-K sound is easily had, the Fusion 800S has so much more to offer. Whatever my basses wanted to do, this rig was there for it. Testing it with a Sire Marcus Miller V7, the amp quickly fell into a round jazz tone. The contour filter puts you into prime slap territory by cutting the mids, but also boosting the highs and lows to keep an even volume level. Similarly, I could quickly dial in some old-school sounds with a short-scale Reverend Wattplower by pulling back the already beefy lows and dialling in the mids. The presence filter easily accentuated the singing high register of a Marleaux Consat for gorgeous chords.

The overdrive section, as Bob Gallien states in his own demo, is not meant to replace the colours of a overdrive or distortion pedal, but to "give you the feel of an amplifier at its limit". I found that to be true, with a warmer, more organic drive. The intelligent flexibility of the Cut and Body switches helps to sculpt it more than just driving an amp would. The top end helps to cut through a dense mix, but if it's too harsh for your liking, the filters quickly tame the highs.

## Conclusion

After you get the hang of how the knobs and buttons interact, this rig is a total blast. It has its own character – several, actually – but it's so versatile that it will reinforce whatever sound you're going for. The cost is relatively high, but this rig is an investment, because this setup is one that is built for the ages: physically and sonically.

The cab, while looking like a tank with its tough coating and metal grille, weighs a mere 63 pounds

# LUNA GUITARS Tribal

If only more acoustics combined this much quality with a price this low, says the Editor

**LUNA GUITARS**
www.lunaguitars.com

**£300 approx**

Basses with an acoustic element can sometimes be difficult to love, with their perennial issues of unwieldy balance and limited tones hard to resolve unless you pay a hefty chunk of cash, which means you're then reluctant to gig the instrument. What we need from any acoustic bass – and its electro-acoustic and acoustic-electric variants – is for it to be playable, with a decent tone range, and for it to be able to take a few knocks without breaking the bank. This highly affordable Luna Guitars bass is the closest we've come to that ideal in some time.

## Build Quality

Pick up the Tribal and your lower back immediately thanks you, as it only weighs 4.6 pounds (2.1 kg). The downside of playing a bass as lightweight as this normally means that the tones are weak, or that the thing will break in half when (not if) your intoxicated drummer kicks it across the room, but that's not the case this time.

The usual acoustic features are here, with a set neck, 19 accessible frets of 22, generic tuners and a truss-rod visible through the soundhole. The simple bridge is balsamo, a dense hardwood; there's a pop-out battery compartment next to the output socket; and we're given the usual phosphor bronze strings. There's some headstock dive, but it's not a deal-breaker, all of which adds up to a regular cheap acoustic package of the kind that we've been reviewing here for the last three decades.

## Sounds And Playability

What makes the Tribal bass so much, much better than that mundane introduction is its electronics, which elevate the instrument to a much higher plane. It comes with Luna's own SL3 preamp, which isn't just the usual tuner, phase and EQ. Switch it on to tune up, and it mutes the output before offering you an unexpectedly wide range of options. While cheaper tuners simply point you in the direction of sharp or flat, this one tells you the note you're playing, and also allows you to select notes by individual frequencies, an advanced feature that I haven't seen elsewhere.

The tones are unusually broad, too. Truly subby bass for reggae players isn't completely achievable: after all, this is an acoustic instrument, so the laws of physics still insist on a certain amount of scratchy treble in its sound. You'll still be taken aback by the huge low-end boost of which the Tribal is capable, though, and the mids and treble boosts are very effective too. The tiny controls don't have central detentes, which might hinder bassists on a dark stage and/or in a 'refreshed' state, but they're manageable. Try scooping the EQ to give your audience a battering at both ends of the spectrum – they'll love it.

As for the instrument's playability, which is usually the factor that makes bass players go back to a regular electric after a given time, there's nothing to worry about here. The relatively narrow 3.6" (90mm)

**A bass that is well designed and constructed with a secret weapon in the form of a preamp**

body and slippery neck finish mean that you don't have to fight it, or walk away from a session with a dent in your picking-hand forearm, and the highest register is reasonably accessible thanks to the cutaway. A thumb rest would have been useful, but then I always say that with acoustics: resolve this by resting your thumb on the E string, or simply adopting the ol' floating thumb technique.

## Conclusion

For a relatively meagre outlay, you're rewarded with a bass that is well designed and constructed, plus there's a secret weapon in the form of the preamp. Together, these give you a range of tones that will suit more or less any situation, and considering how playable this bass is, that all adds up to a pretty phenomenal deal. Investigate with our recommendation.

### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

**Luna Guitars Tribal Acoustic-Electric**
**Price** | £300 approx
**Made in** | China
**Body** | Eastern mahogany sides, spruce top
**Neck** | Eastern mahogany, 34" scale
**Neck join** | Set neck
**Fingerboard** | Balsamo, 22 frets
**Pickup** | Luna
**Electronics** | Luna SL3 preamp
**Controls** | Volume, three-band EQ, tuner, Note, Pitch and Phase controls
**Hardware** | Die-cast tuners, balsamo bridge
**Weight** | 4.6 lbs / 2.1 kg
**Case/gigbag included?** | Gigbag
**Left-hand available?** | No

**BP RATING**

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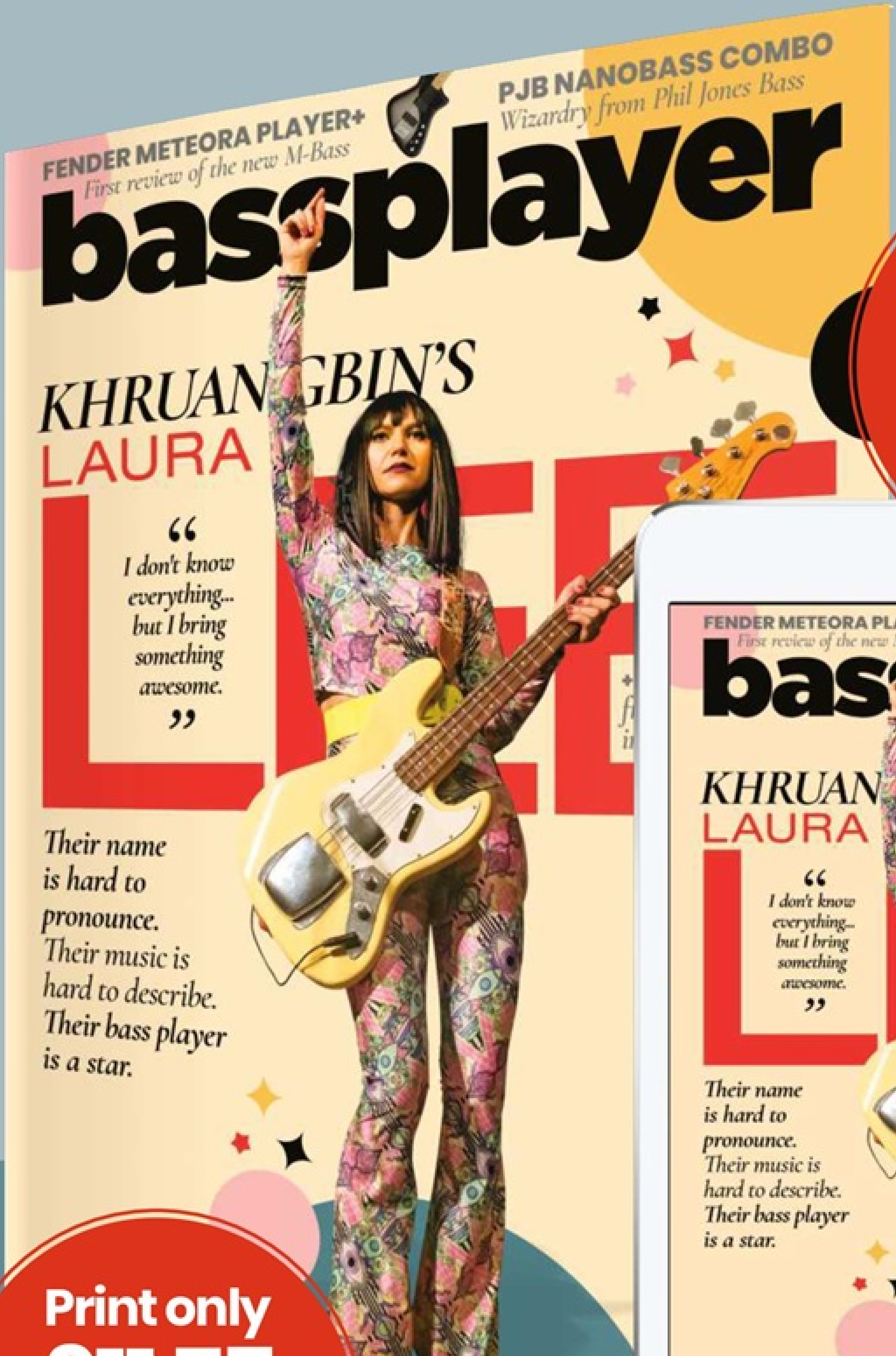

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# Bass Lessons

Making you a better bass player in every issue, our state-of-the-art team of educators will guide you every step of the way. Say hello to them here!

I SPY... 62

## RYAN MADORA

**Dig into your favourite bass parts... and discover treasure!**
Ryan Madora is one of Nashville's most sought-after touring and session bassists. Recent touring and session credits include Robben Ford, Kyshona Armstrong, and her instrumental trio, The Interludes. For the past five years, she has served as musical director for Bobby Bones and has played with Garth Brooks, Darius Rucker, and Carrie Underwood. In addition to instructing at Nashville's campus of Musician's Institute, Ryan has taught at Gerald Veasley's Bass Boot Camp, Rock'n'Roll Fantasy Camp, and at universities across the USA. She has contributed columns to No Treble for over a decade and in 2019, published her first book, *Bass Players To Know: Learning From The Greats*. Ryan offers online education at TrueFire and her website.
www.ryanmadora.com
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BEGINNER 64

## STEVE LAWSON

**Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here**
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across more than two decades of touring, and a huge catalogue of solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for almost three decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?
www.stevelawson.net
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INTERMEDIATE 70

## PHILIP MANN

**Now you're rolling, it's time to hit the next level**
Philip Mann studied at the London College of Music, securing bachelor's and master's degrees in performance before receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. Endorsed by Overwater and Eich, he's a busy, internationally freelancing electric and double bassist. His performance and session credits include work with Grammy Award-winning artists Van Morrison and Albert Lee, five-time Grammy Award nominee Hunter Hayes, Deep Purple's Steve Morse, Leo Sayer, Billy Bragg and country artist Peter Donegan. Author of the *Chord Tone Concepts* texts, Philip is currently a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School while simultaneously lecturing for Scott's Bass Lessons.
www.withbassinmind.com
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ADVANCED 76

## RICH BROWN

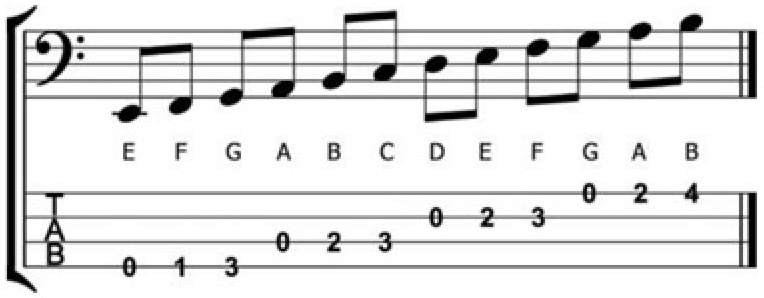
**Maximise your bass skills with our advanced studies**
Toronto-born electric bassist Rich Brown has established himself as an incredibly versatile artist. Along with being one of the most called-upon electric bass players in Canada, Rich is a composer, producer, bandleader, educator and clinician, broadcaster, and voiceover artist. He has recorded three albums as a leader, including his critically acclaimed album of solo bass compositions *Between Heaviness & Here*.
Rich appears on a plethora of recordings, ranging from jazz to traditional Arabic and Asian music. He has performed with a wide variety of artists, including Rudresh Mahanthappa, Vijay Iyer, Steve Coleman and Angelique Kidjo. Rich leads two groups – rinsethealgorithm and The Abeng – and was nominated for a Juno Award in 2016 for his latest album, *Abeng*.
fbass.com/artists/rich-brown
**Instagram** richbrownbass
**Youtube** Brown'stone With Rich Brown

# BP Notation Legend

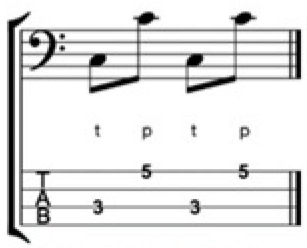
## The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in Bass Player magazine

**The Stave:** Most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

**Tablature:** This is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

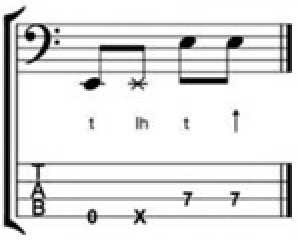



## PLAYING TECHNIQUES



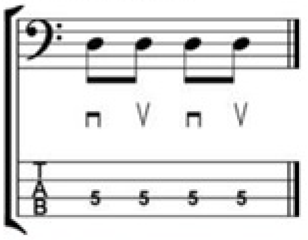

### SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'.



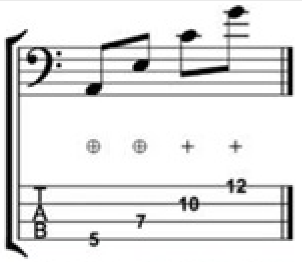

### ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow.




### PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

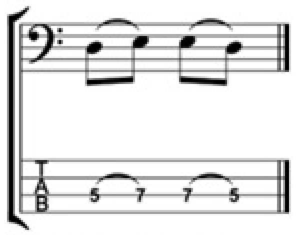
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up).




### TAPPING TECHNIQUES

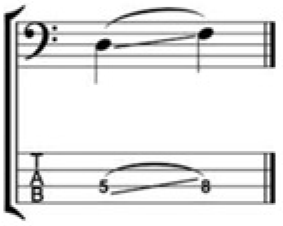
Fretting hand taps have a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are just '+'. Particular fingers may be shown with numbers.

## FRETTING TECHNIQUES



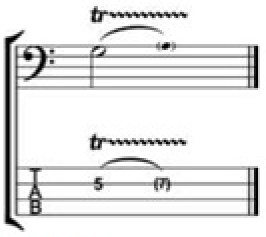

### HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

These are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand.



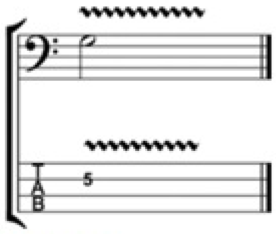

### SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note and then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note.




### TRILLS

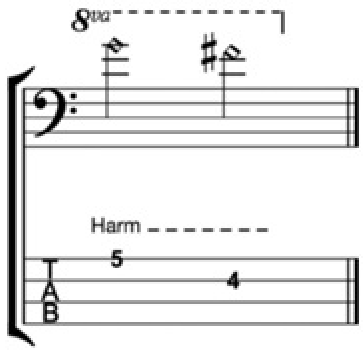
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown, using hammer-ons and pull-offs.




### VIBRATO

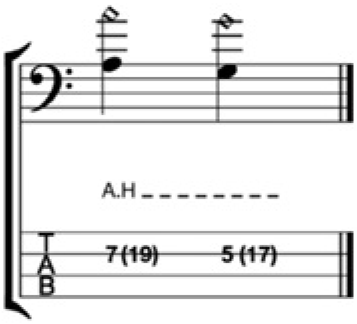
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger.

## PLAYING HARMONICS




### NATURAL HARMONICS

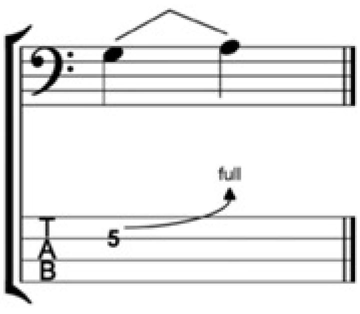
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated.




### ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

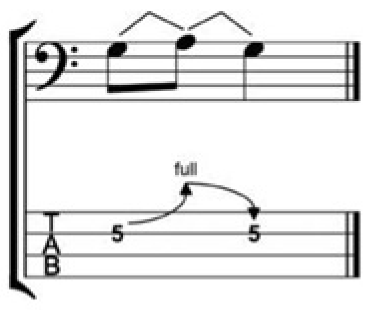
Pluck while fretting the lower note and touching the edge of the picking hand thumb to the note in brackets.

## BENDING NOTES




### BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ indicates a semitone, 'full' indicates a tone.




### BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated and then released back to its original pitch.

# Ryan Madora

I SPY...

# NOT-JUST-COUNTRY ROOTS AND FIFTHS

**In session and stage bassist Ryan Madora's amazing column, we discover a stack of useful secrets hidden inside our favourite bass-lines**

Hey there, bass players! If there's one thing I enjoy, it's a good ol' boy country bass-line that moves between the root and the fifth. I do live in Nashville, after all. While this pattern is commonly associated with country music, it actually provides the framework for countless Latin grooves, pop and rock bass-lines, and jazz standards. It can be boot-scottin' or bossa nova, dub or doo-wop. It's got a 'Peaceful Easy Feeling' or it can be 'Feelin' Alright'. Okay, okay, you get the picture, let's dig in!

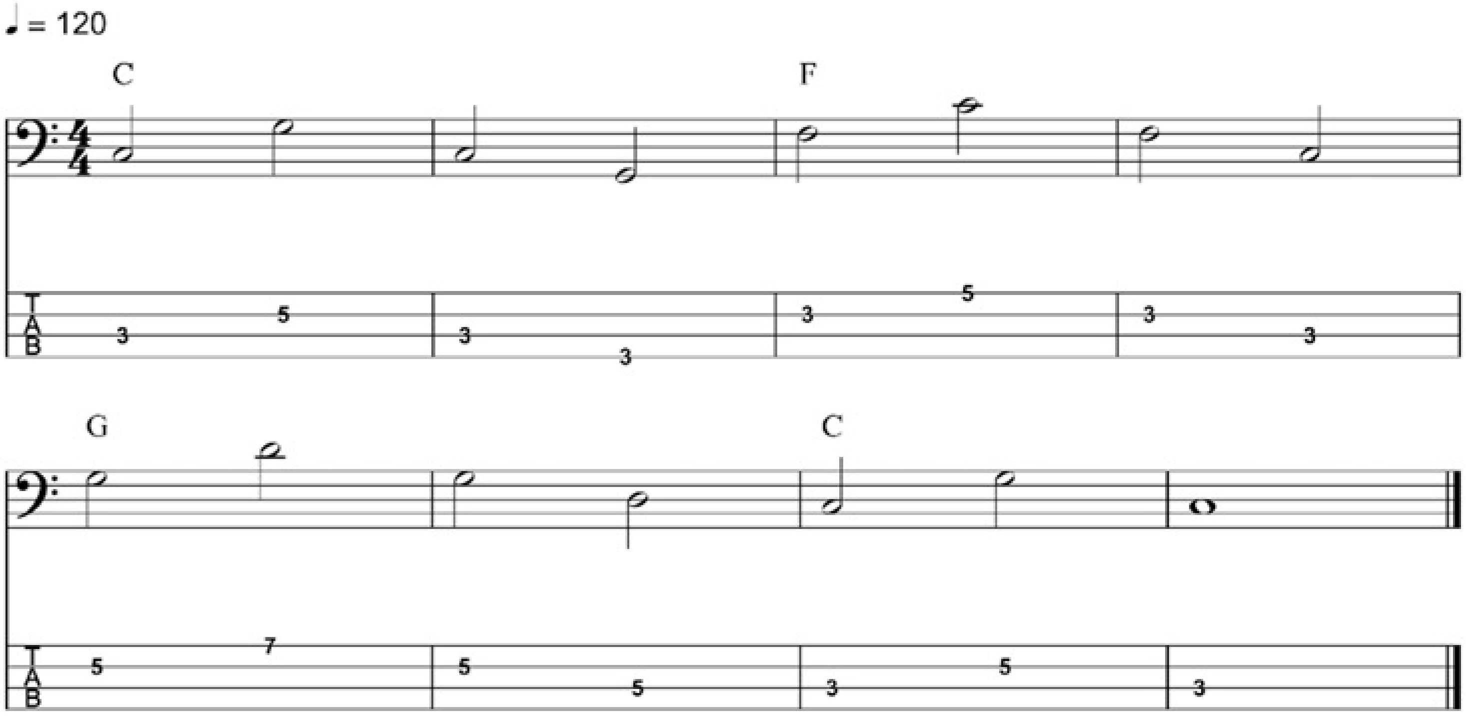
So how could a two-note pattern be so widely used and utterly perfect? Well, it fits over both major and minor chords, it provides just enough information to anchor the harmony, and the notes are easy to play on our instrument. Plus, it lends itself to rhythmic adaptation and can take on different feels depending on tempo and the usage of dead notes. And last but not least, it allows us to play with direction as we move through a chord progression. While this pattern often gets labelled as 'country', it's widely used in the traditional music of many cultures.

Before we start playing, let's explore the pattern from the theory perspective. In addition to both notes serving as chord tones of major and minor arpeggios, there's just something special about how this movement sounds. The root note provides a sense of stability and grounding. It is, after all, rooting the harmony. The fifth, however, fulfils two roles. It sounds consonant as a chord tone but it also wants to move, or more importantly, to resolve.

This hints at an incredibly important musical concept, the dominant-to-tonic relationship. This concept asserts that a dominant chord (which naturally occurs on the fifth scale degree of a key) has a strong pull to the tonic chord (which is built on the root note of the key). In other words, the V chord wants to resolve to the I chord. This is widely used within our world of Western harmony and we've learned to derive satisfaction from it. So, whether we're playing full chords or single notes, there's something lingering in the back of our mind that urges us to take advantage of this movement.

Now that we better understand the theory behind it, let's dig into **Exercise 1**. We're going to use our friendly I-IV-V-I chord progression in the key of C, playing each chord for two bars. In the first bar, we'll play the root note and ascend to the fifth. Begin at C on the 3rd fret of the A string and then play G on the 5th fret of the D string. In the second bar, we'll play the root note and descend to the lower fifth, moving from C on the 3rd fret of the A string to G on the 3rd fret of the E string. Notice the shape of this pattern and how the higher fifth is one string higher and two frets up while the lower fifth is on the same fret, just one string lower. Move these patterns across the chord progression, C Major – F Major – G Major – C Major.

## EXERCISE ONE



In **Exercise 2**, we'll move to the key of G, change the rhythm, and learn how to pick and choose between using the higher fifth or lower fifth. Our chord progression will go G–Am–D–G or I–ii–V–I. Due to the fact that we're starting on the lower G, we can only ascend to the higher fifth (unless you happen to be playing a five-string bass).

On the Am chord, play the root note on the fifth fret of the E string and use the higher fifth (E on the 7th fret of the A string). We're specifically using the higher fifth because it's just a whole step away from where we intend on landing, the D on the fifth fret of the A string. Once you're there, play the lower fifth of the D chord, A on the 5th fret of the E string. Using this lower fifth will make it easy to resolve back to the low G. You may recognise this rhythm and root-fifth movement in Otis Redding's '(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay'.

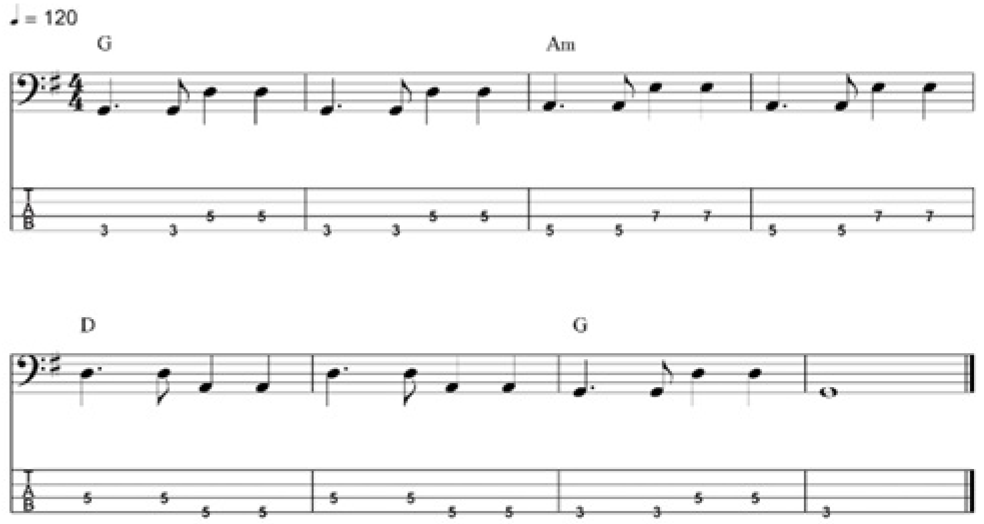
As you play this exercise, be aware of how your note choices imply direction. Regardless of the song you're playing, the decision to use the higher or lower fifth will depend on positioning options, the chord progression, and where you want to be on the fretboard. These moves may change if you're playing in a different key, moving between registers, or playing a four-, five- or six-string bass.

In **Exercise 3**, we'll play the same notes but with a different feel. A small adjustment to the rhythm will make it sound a bit more country or rock rather than R&B. This comes from setting up the downbeat with an eighth note on the 'and-of-four'. The more you increase the tempo, the more it will take on an up-beat country vibe (try playing it at 100bpm, 125bpm, and 150bpm). You can even try playing the same exercise with dead notes instead of pitched notes in **Exercise 4**. This adaptation works well alongside a drummer playing a fast train-beat.

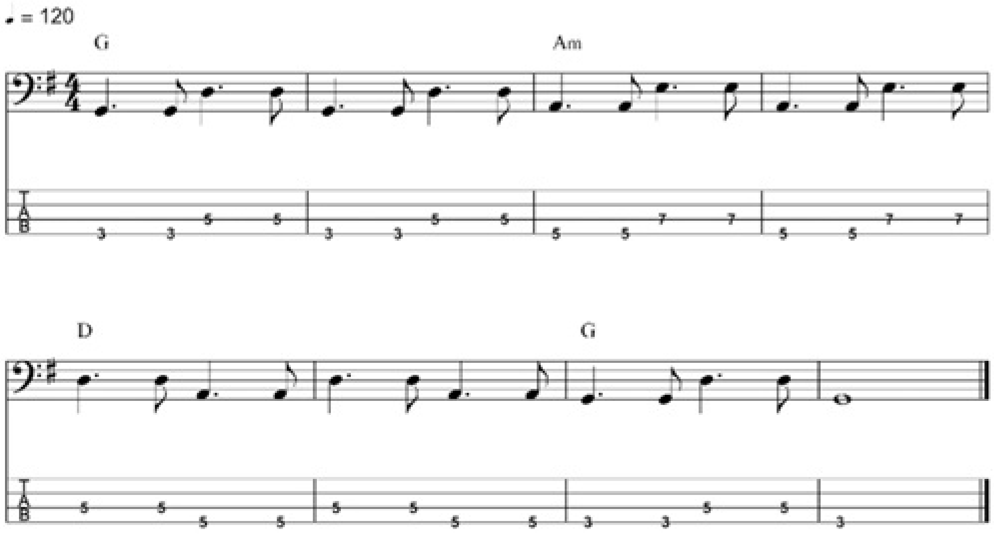
Now, let's do some spying. First up, 'Help!' by the Beatles. Paul McCartney bounces between the root and fifth throughout the verses and gives us a one-two punch on the record by following it up with similar movement on 'The Night Before'.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, we have 'Spain' by Chick Corea with Stanley Clarke exercising roots and fifths all over the fretboard. This brisk movement outlines the chord changes with a samba feel and provides momentum throughout the solo sections. And we'll throw in a Carol Kaye reference just for good measure. The bass-line of 'Feelin' Alright' by Joe Cocker features a greasy back-and-forth with plenty of passing notes in between. It's simple, it's effective, and it grooves. See you next month!

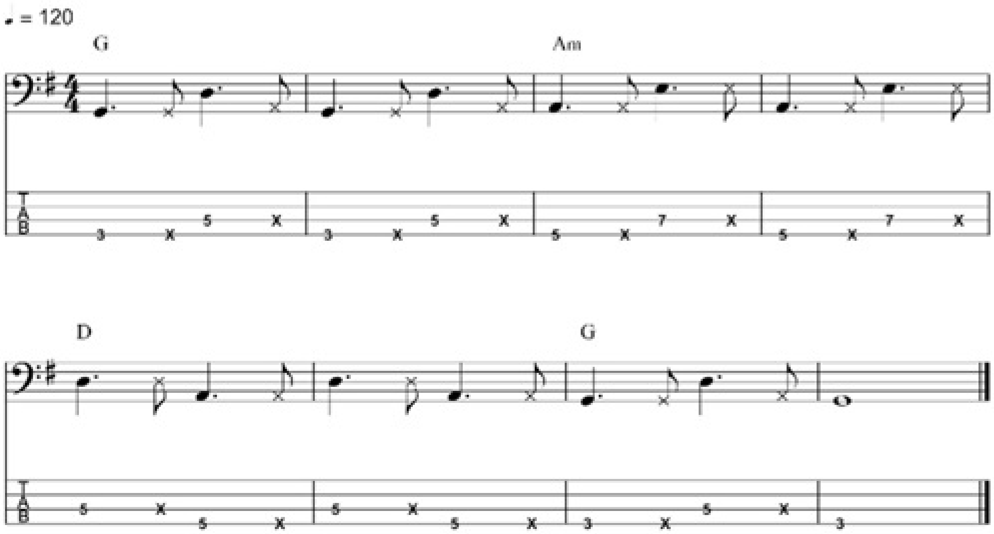
## EXERCISE TWO




## EXERCISE THREE




## EXERCISE FOUR



# Beginners Lesson

START HERE!

# LEARN TO CROSS STRINGS

The great Steve Lawson brings us a new approach to studying bass at beginner level. The journey begins...

Right, last month I got to write the Intermediate column, so just to make things interesting, this month I'm going to continue with the focus on rhythmic groupings that I started there, but we'll focus on string crossing and repetition today. Using some simpler examples, we'll think about what opportunities our changes in phrasing can bring for any drummer we're working with. As we've noted before, string crossing is often the point at which ideas that we've been developing on a single string can fall apart if we don't give them enough attention. So let's give it plenty of attention!

Before that, I want to talk a little about what do with exercises, because the fact that a thing is written down makes it feel like it's the most important thing to learn. It stands to reason that the things I choose to notate as examples, or that end up in this or that book, are the things you really need to know, right?

Wrong. Unless the transcription is of a particular song or a very specific example of a particular player's approach, it's of the utmost importance to realise what 'an example' is and to accept the invitation to explore far beyond the constraints of the few examples that fit the page in a magazine lesson, or even a more comprehensive tuition book. These are just examples. There's no sense in which this version is any more important for you to learn than any other possible set of variations on the theme we're looking at.

For a beginner, examples are really useful to intentionally limit the focus of what you're playing to a set of very specific tasks, but that still doesn't mean they're ultimately more useful than any of the other variations that exist of that particular concept. It's okay for it to take time for you to assimilate the aspects of a particular new idea, and in getting to that point, specific examples can lead the way.

Whenever someone introduces a new approach, or codifies how people have been doing a thing into a method, there's a period of time where those specific licks crop up. I remember hearing players in the late Eighties and into the Nineties who had very obviously learned how to play slap bass from either Tony Oppenheim's legendary book *Slap It!* or from Alexis Skarevski's tour-de-force video *The Slap Bass Program*. For a time, those licks and shapes were cropping up verbatim in people's playing – but over the years, instead of this approach being understood as a collection of licks and phrases, it took on a more *gestalt* quality – a 'way of being' with the instrument.

There's still a whole lot of both Tony and Alexis' wisdom and learning in how I play slap bass, but I can't remember the last time I played, or heard someone else play, a lick taken wholesale from either method. They are now fully assimilated into the canon of bass – so let's aim for assimilation. Right, on with the lesson...

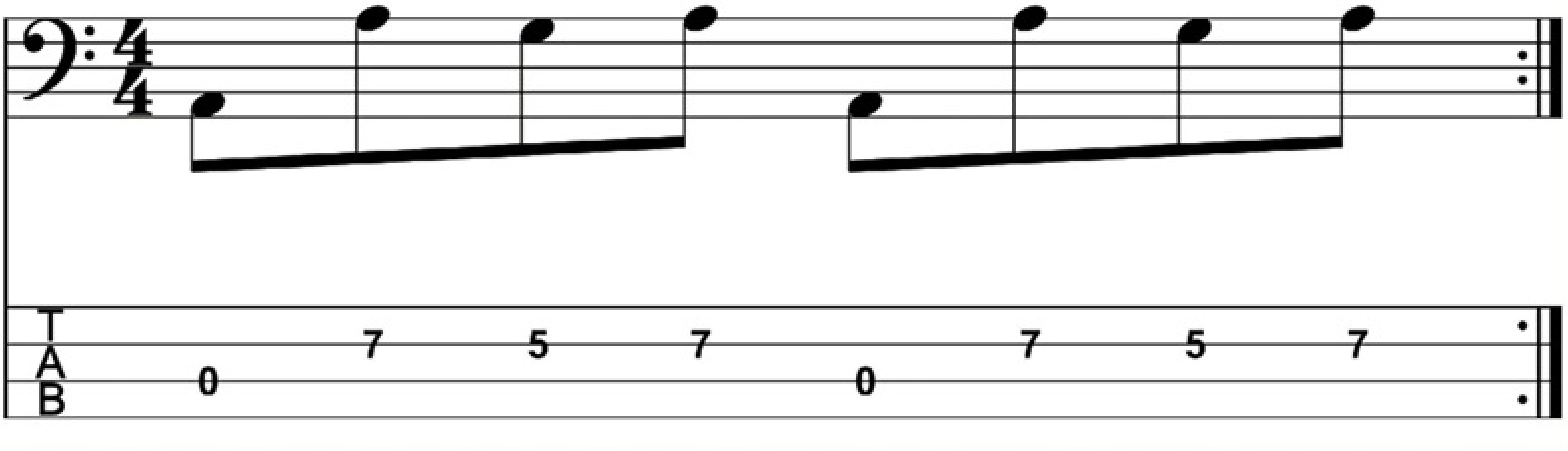
What we're going to do this month is take a number of simple two and four beat groove ideas and extend them by repeating notes with the pattern. This lets us see how we can make more complex ideas out of the building blocks of simple ideas. Let's start with a four-note pattern in Exercise 1.

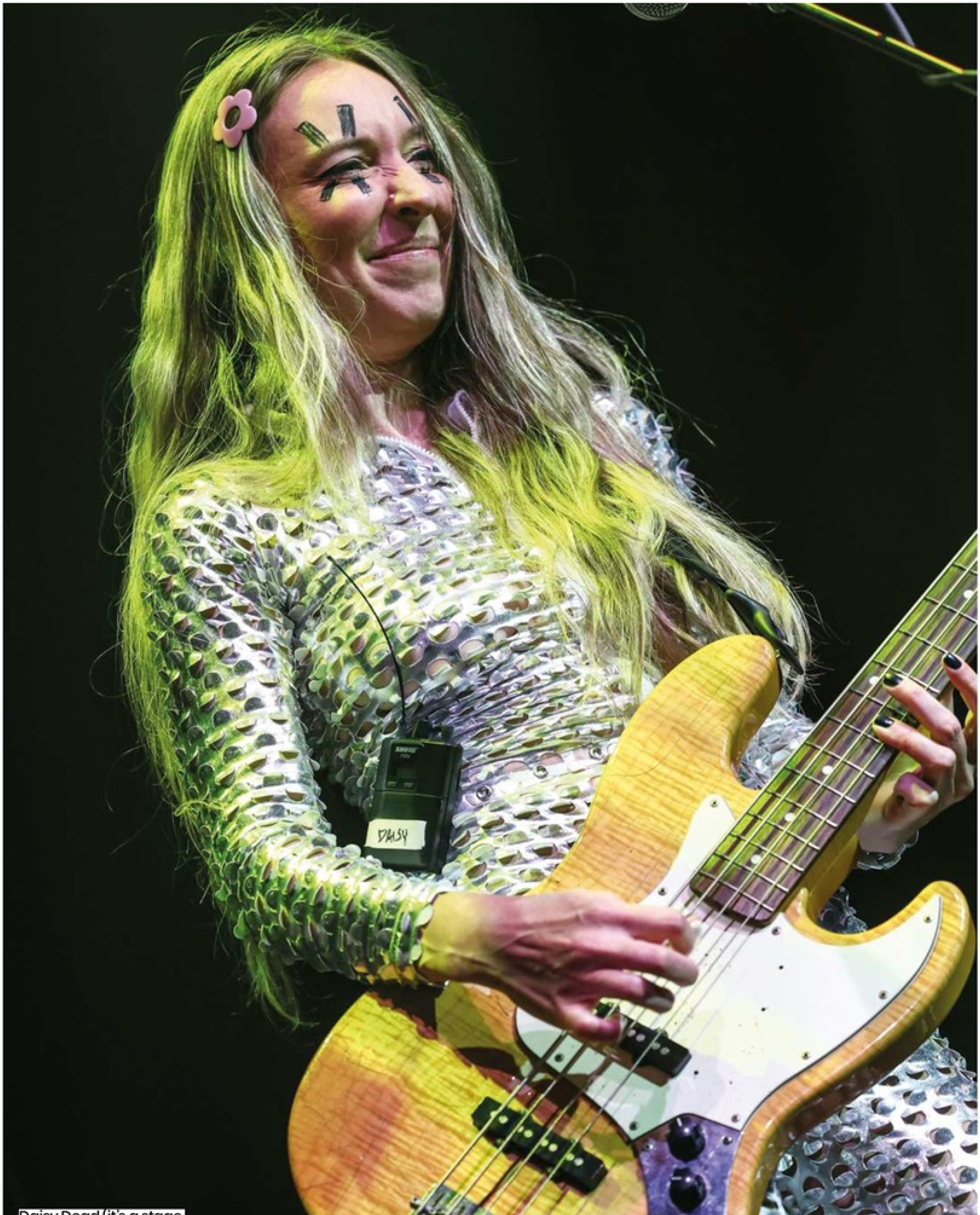
### EXERCISE ONE

Our line here lasts for two beats, repeated twice in each bar. You can also play the open A at the fifth fret on the E string to practise playing it in a moveable position, in case you want to try it in another key or over a different chord. Focus on making sure that

> **Think about what opportunities our changes in phrasing can bring for any drummer we're working with**

EXERCISE ONE

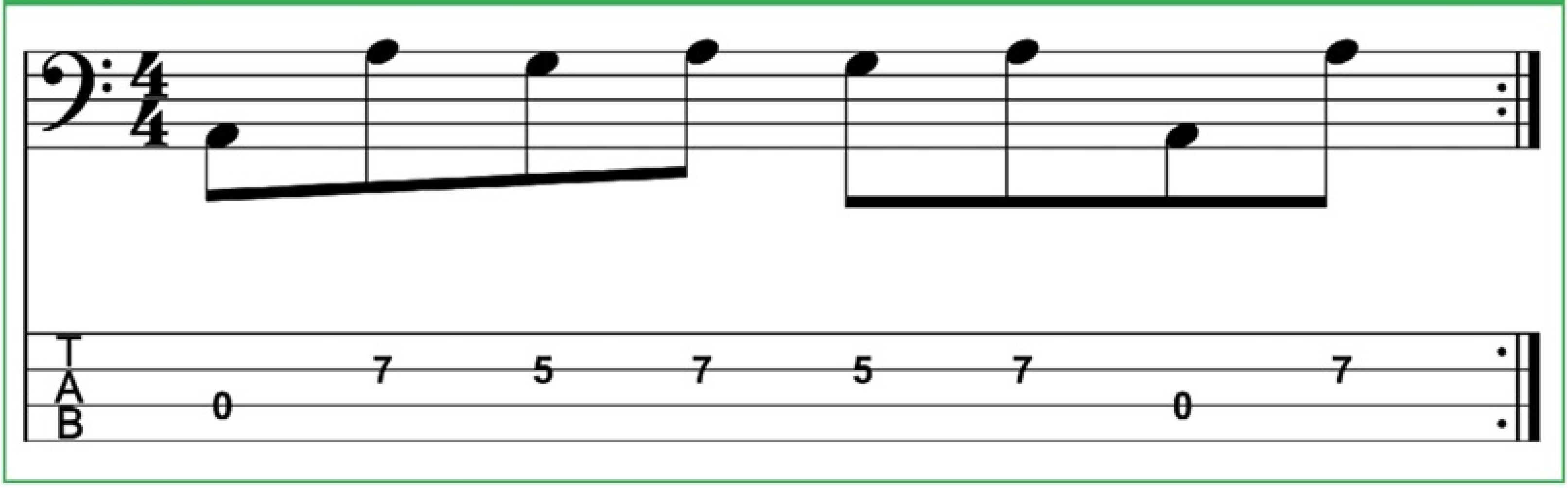




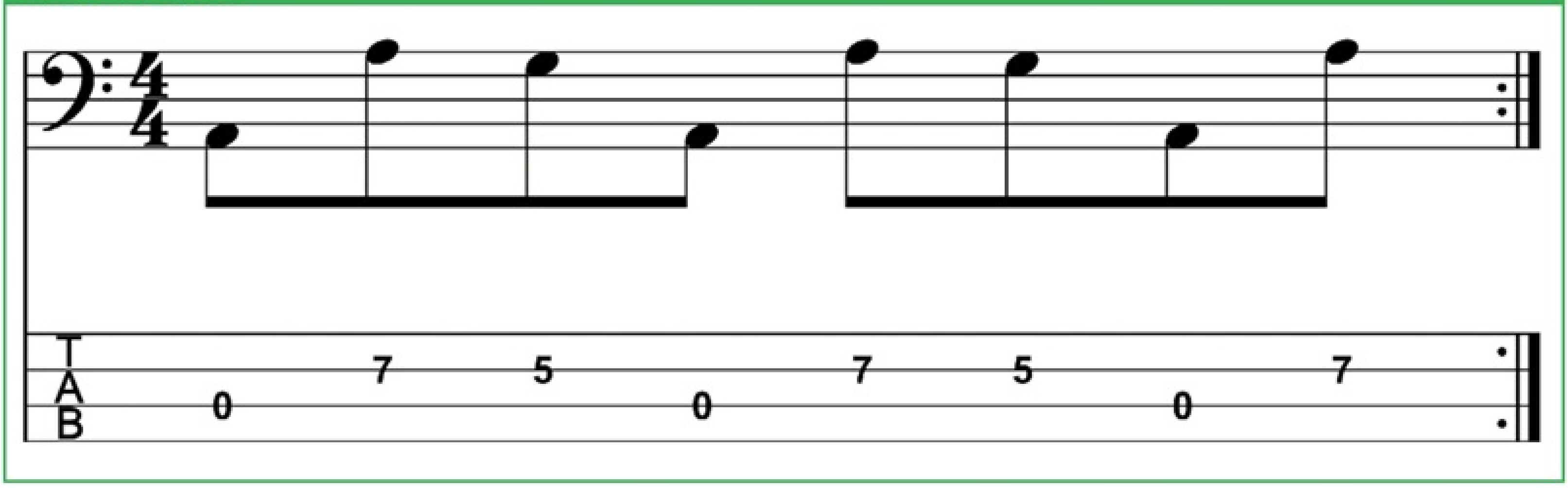
Daisy Dead (it's a stage name) in Nashville, 2022.

© Terry Wyatt/Getty

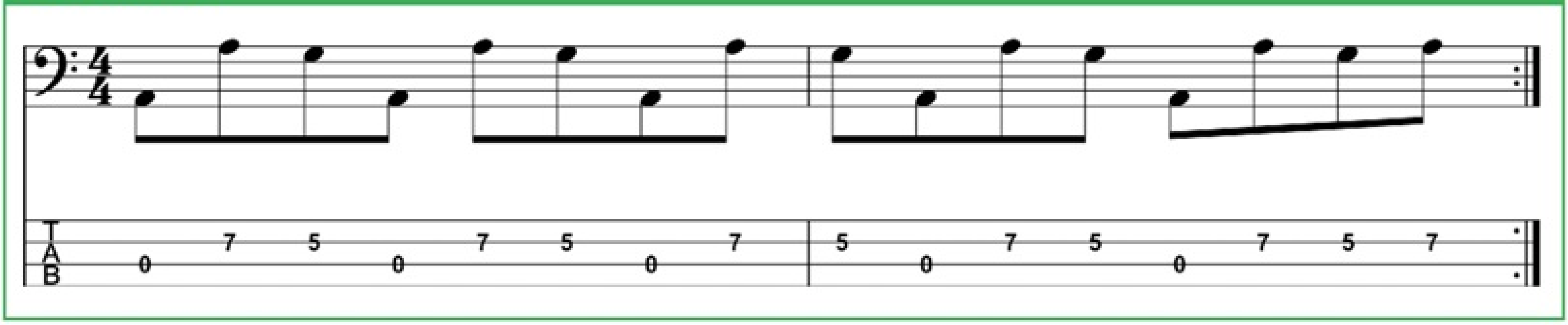
EXERCISE TWO



EXERCISE THREE



EXERCISE FOUR



the notes are all the same length, and that the ones where you're changing string don't suddenly get longer or shorter than the rest.

To practise this, you can move the high A and G to the twelfth and tenth frets on the A string. You may even end up preferring the sound of the line all played on one string, but it may also limit your options as we start to move things around, so please do work it out across two strings as well!

Two beat lines get overly familiar very quickly, so let's look at some ways to extend the line. Our first is simply to treat our four-note phrase as two groups of two and swap them in the second half, as shown in Exercise 2.

**Giving the drummer some room to switch around what's happening may end up giving the song a more memorable feel**

### EXERCISE TWO

The first thing this does is extend the line to a full bar. That's useful for starters, but it also gives us a new accent in the second half of the bar with the displaced open A. This can be really useful if we're trying to come up with a line that gives the drummer something a little more creative to write to. So many drum parts are built around Kick on 1 and 3, Snare on 2 and 4, so giving the

drummer an accented note on beat 4 gives them some room to switch around what's happening. This may well end up giving the song a more memorable feel.

Following that logic through, as well taking our four-note phrase and mixing it up, we could make it a three-note phrase to give us another placement for the open A string. Try Exercise 3.

## EXERCISE THREE

So far we've added no extra notes and no additional rhythmic figures – just eighth notes, root, octave and the flat seventh – but our three-note grouping here gives us all kinds of places to go in terms of influencing the other instruments. Let's take that three-note idea and extend it over the bar line to create a two-bar loop, as in Exercise 4.

Upright citizen: Jeff Steinhart of the Furious Seasons.

© Scott Dudelson/Getty

## EXERCISE FOUR

Remember what we said at the top? As soon as each of these approaches to modifying our four-note phrase is clear to you, and you can play the example as written, you're welcome – encouraged, even – to try creating four-note phrases of your own and go through the same set of transformations to see what impact it has.

Let's add two more notes and see what happens if, instead of dropping a note from the first four-note phrase, we add one and make it a five-note phrase. This means that to make it up to eight notes for a single bar, we can add our three-note phrase on the end of whatever we come up with to round it out. Have a look at Exercise 5.

## EXERCISE FIVE

Here you can see that the open A notes are on the first and sixth beats of the bar, giving the drum yet another anchor point for their kick drum and the beginnings of a different kind of groove, with the second kick of the bar displaced by one eighth note.

Where did those second two notes come from? They're derived from the minor pentatonic pattern that we've looked at a number of times in this column over the years, and make for a pretty easy stretch on the fingerboard. However, we've introduced a little more string crossing into our line, as we said at the top, so here you may want to slow things down a little and work on how your picking hand navigates that particular set of notes.

So how can we extend this over two bars? Using the same approach that allowed us to see the eight notes in the bar divided up as five and three, we can take 16 and divide them up as five, five, three and three. Exercise 6 does just that, with exactly the same material as Exercise 5.

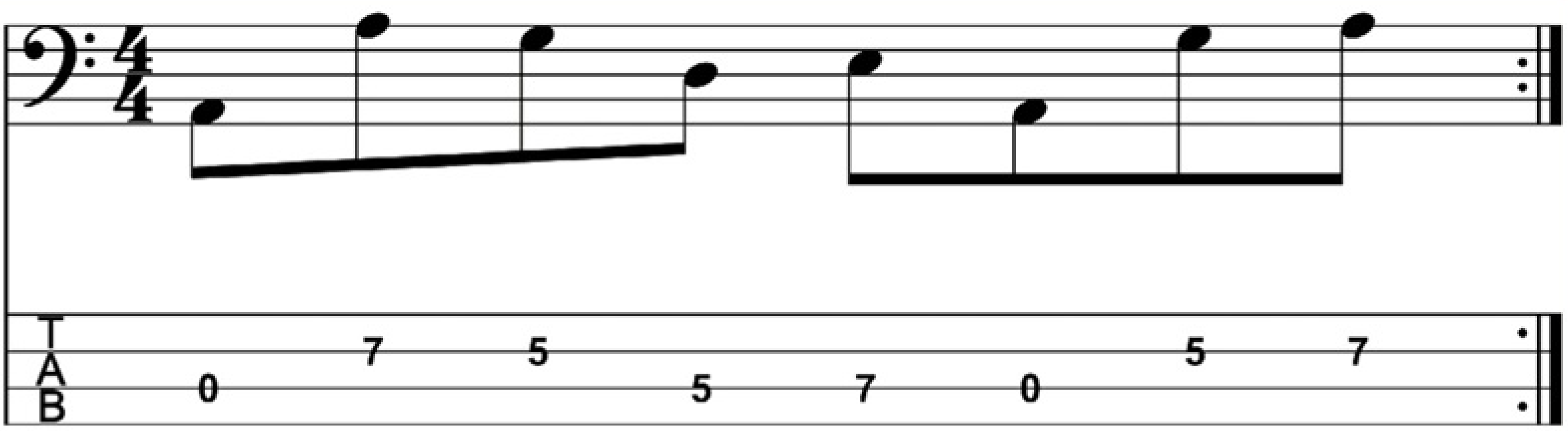
## EXERCISE SIX

This one gets harder to count, but looking at the music can really help us, because we can start to see which notes are back where our old 4x4 subdivision would be. We can start with the drummer playing a normal backbeat, and then have them switch to follow the open strings again.

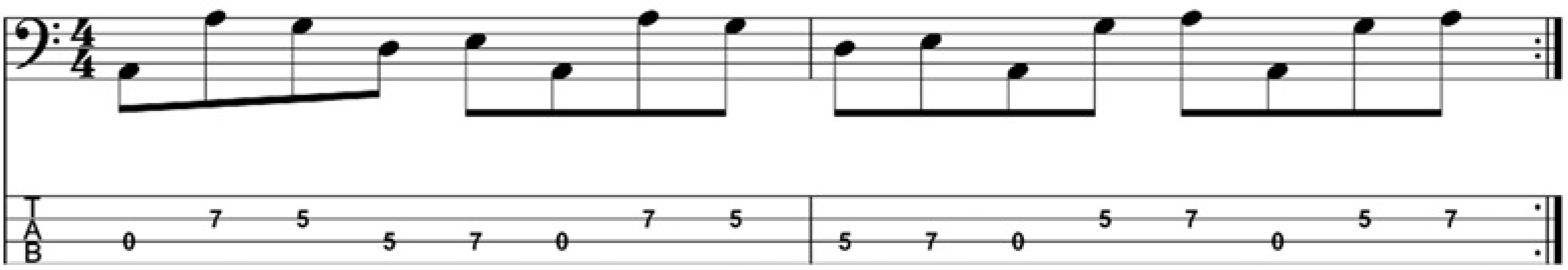
This kind of approach to locking in the kick and the accented bass notes can take a little while to grasp if you're new to it, but as a strategy for breathing life into lines that sound a little formulaic to begin with, it's an easy step forward that doesn't require a huge leap in technical ability.

Let's finish up this month with a variation on our five and three pattern that extends one note to 'mask' the downbeat of the

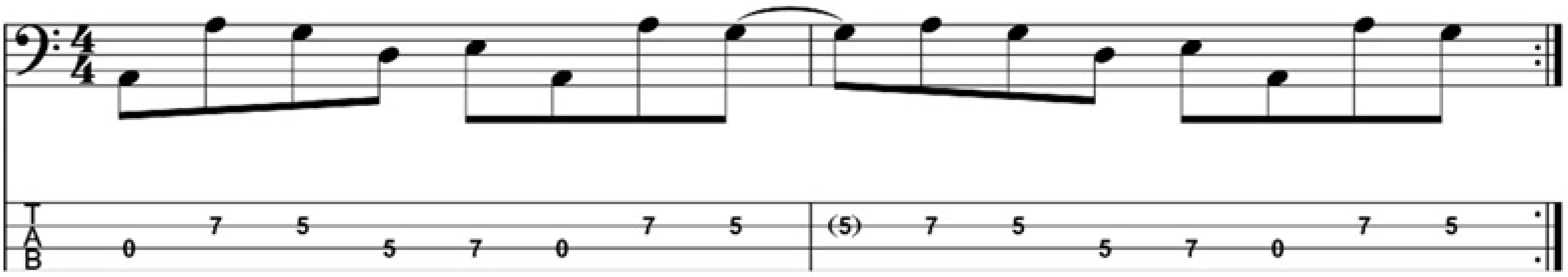
**EXERCISE FIVE**



**EXERCISE SIX**



**EXERCISE SEVEN**



## Differing from a harmonic perspective, rhythm can build tension and release

second bar and gives us a very strong sense of the rhythm moving 'on' and 'off' the beat with alternating bars. This is another really useful concept, and in some ways echoes the kind of alternating rhythmic tension and release that happens in Latin music.

Often, when we talk about tension and release, we mean it from a harmonic perspective, thinking about chords that resolve in certain directions. However, rhythms can build tension and release too, as is often most evident in music that favours rhythmic complexity over harmonic exploration. So when we have a one-chord groove like this, thinking about how we can shift the emphasis in alternate bars can be another way to bring interest to our lines.

So, here's Exercise 7, with the first beat of the second bar removed, and instead tied to the last note of the first bar.

### EXERCISE SEVEN

Now we have no open string in the first half of the second bar, so your drummer has some space to add their own creative flair to the groove, either leaving a big gap, or picking an accent that helps them play an original groove. The world is your very funky oyster!

Remember, these are the beginnings of a journey into being able to remix simple ideas into more complex ones, without needing to add a ton of new harmonic or technical know-how. Simply by extending our counting into less common groupings, but still adding up to the correct number of beats for the bar, we can turn two-beat phrases into one or two bar-length grooves. These can then be extended with additional fills and variations.

Grow slowly, focus on getting the shifts smooth from the open string to the fretted notes on the D string, and see what new variations you can come up with! See you back here next month.

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THE NEXT STEP

# MASTER MINOR SEVENTHS

Minor 7th chords are among the most widely-employed harmonic structures in all contemporary music – but how many of us have truly taken the time to understand this staple vocabulary? After all, these structures appear in 90 percent of every composition we encounter. Let's rectify this today with these exercises, which should point you in the direction of melodic salvation…

**Minor 7th chords appear in 90 percent of every composition we encounter**

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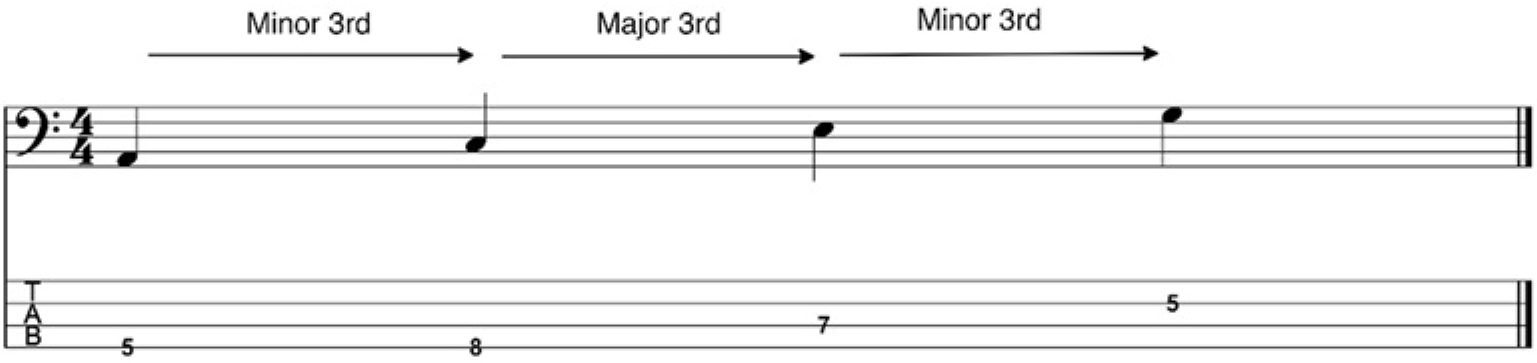
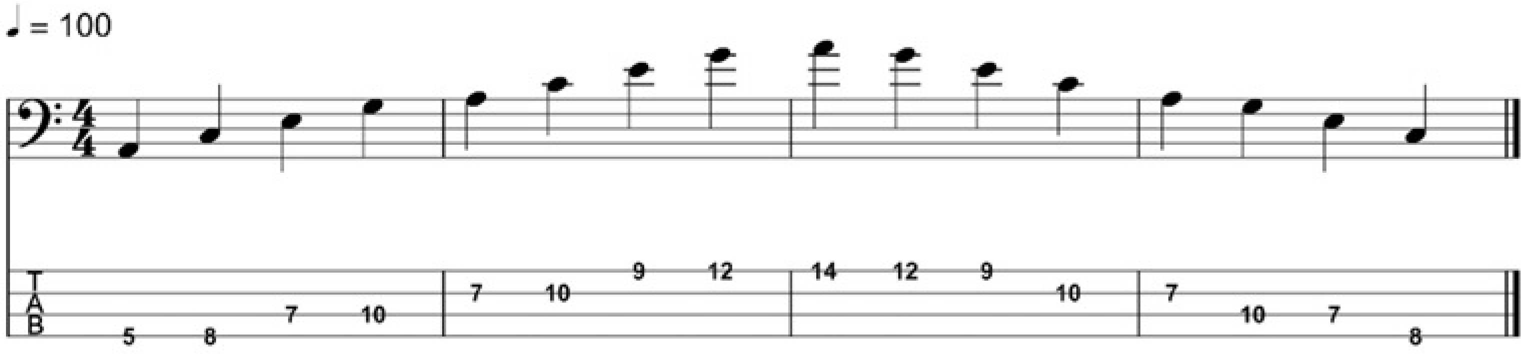
## EXERCISE ONE



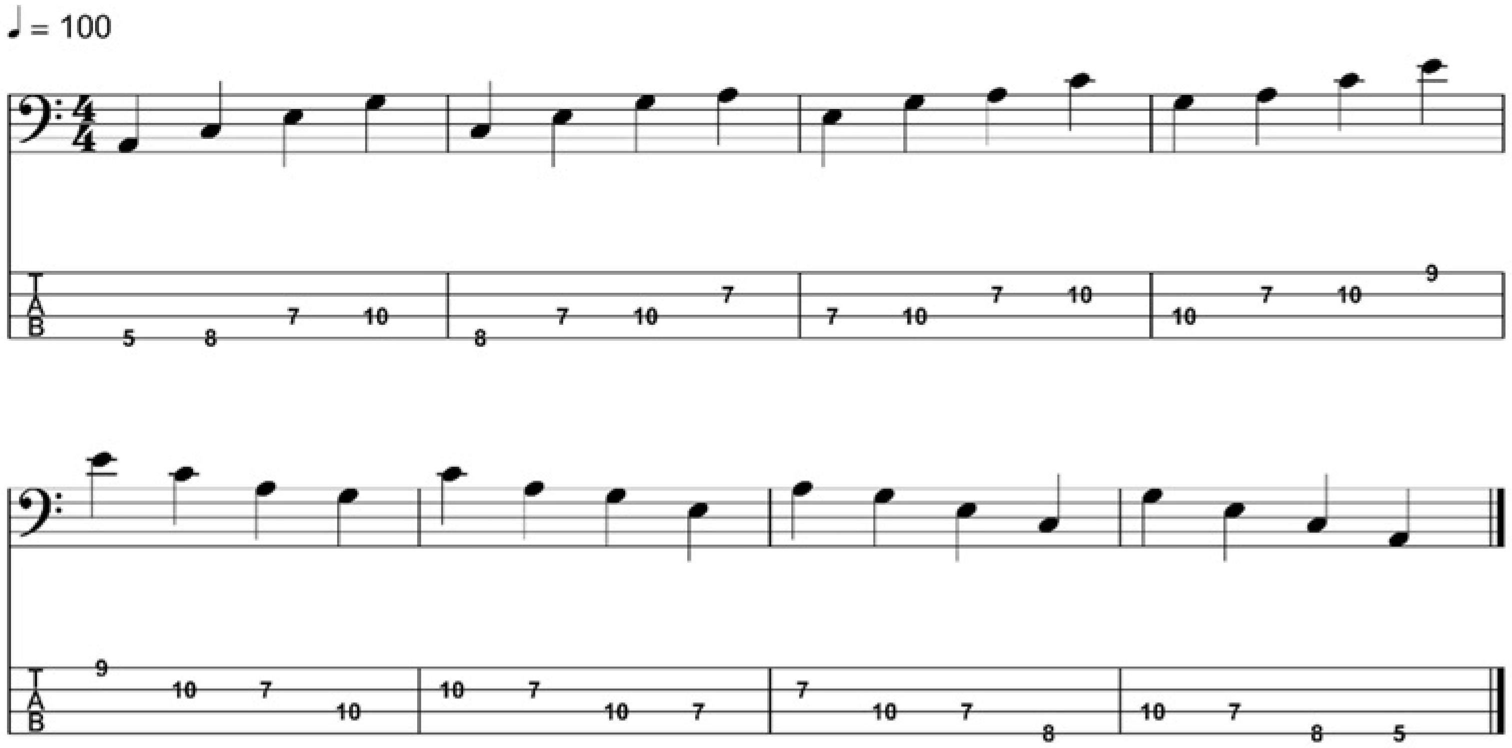

Minor 7th arpeggios are constructed from a formula which consists of three stacked intervals of a third: a root note, minor 3rd, perfect 5th and ♭7th, as seen here.

## EXERCISE TWO



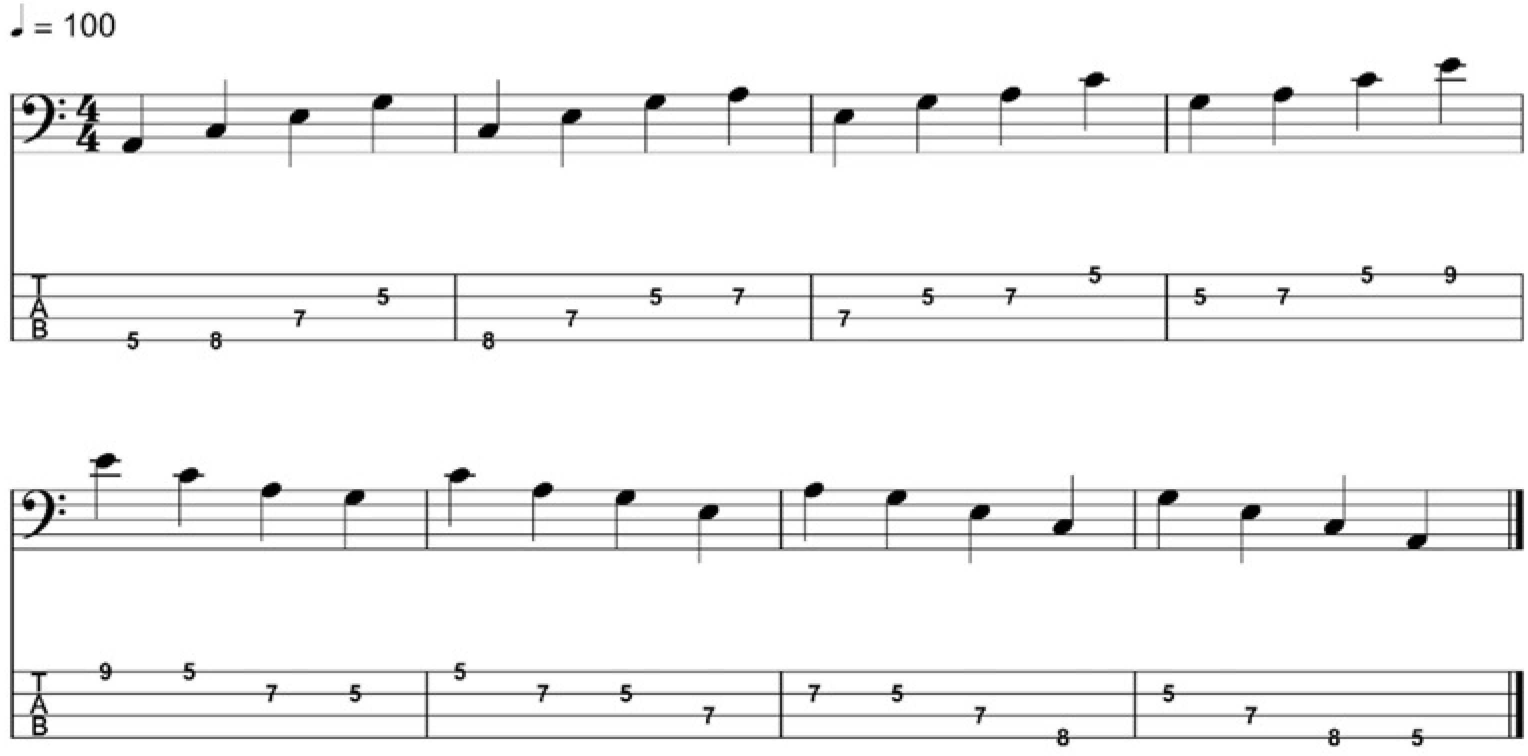

Once you've got the formula in Exercise 1 memorised, it's time to construct a two-octave interpretation. Two-octave arpeggios are fairly straightforward to produce, as they only require you to duplicate the initial notes in a higher register. Remember, the two-octave adaptation still only consists of four pitches! These measures portray a minor 7th arpeggio in a linear fashion. You can play the whole thing with only the index finger and pinky of your fretting hand, which makes the notes very obtainable. Once you've got this down, play the exercise in all keys.

## EXERCISE THREE



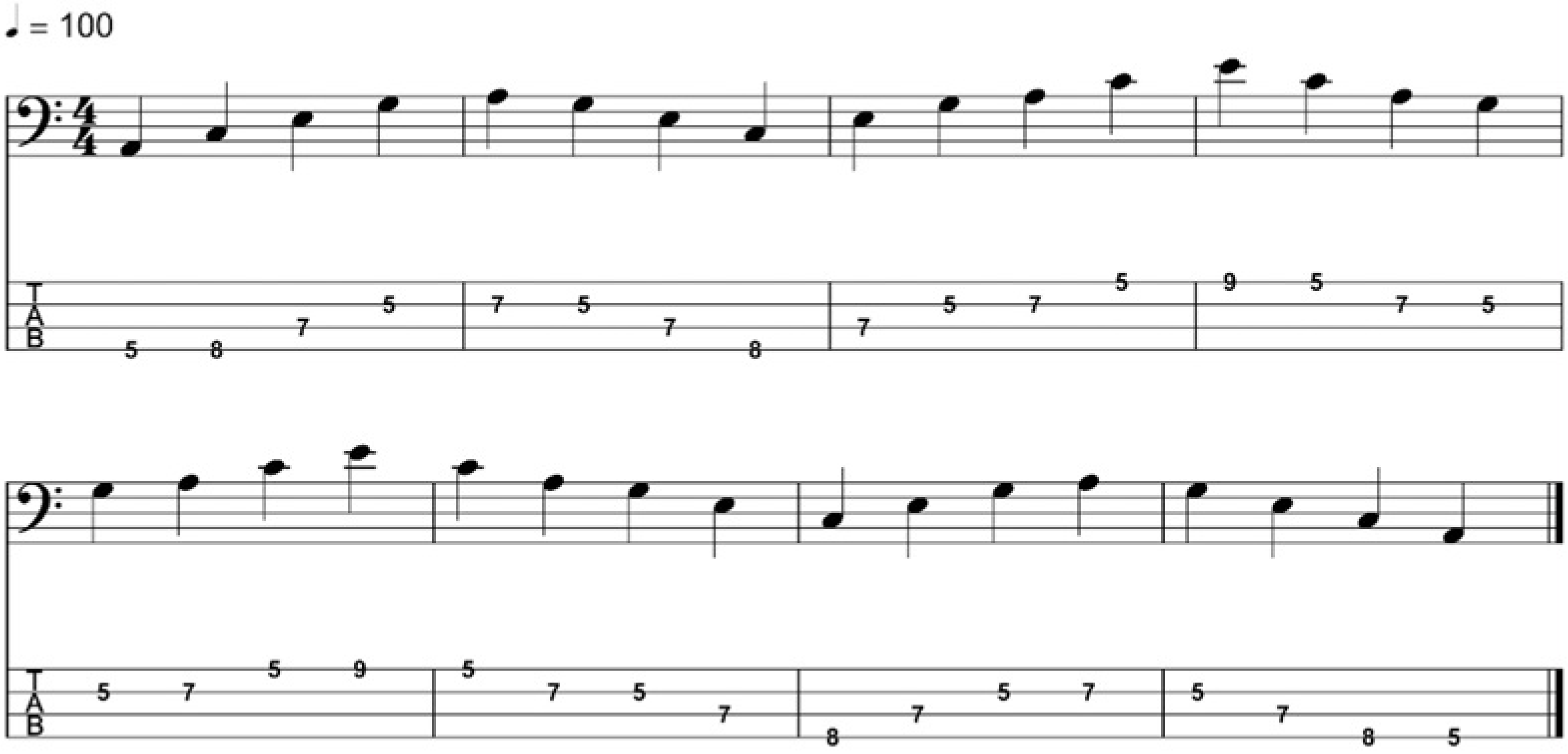
Inversions can be a wonderful source of melodic inspiration, as they naturally generate a fresh view of any melodic or harmonic structure. For every four-note arpeggio in root position, three inversions can be formulated. This exercise gives us our minor 7th arpeggios in root position, as well as the ensuing first, second and third inversions.

## EXERCISE FOUR



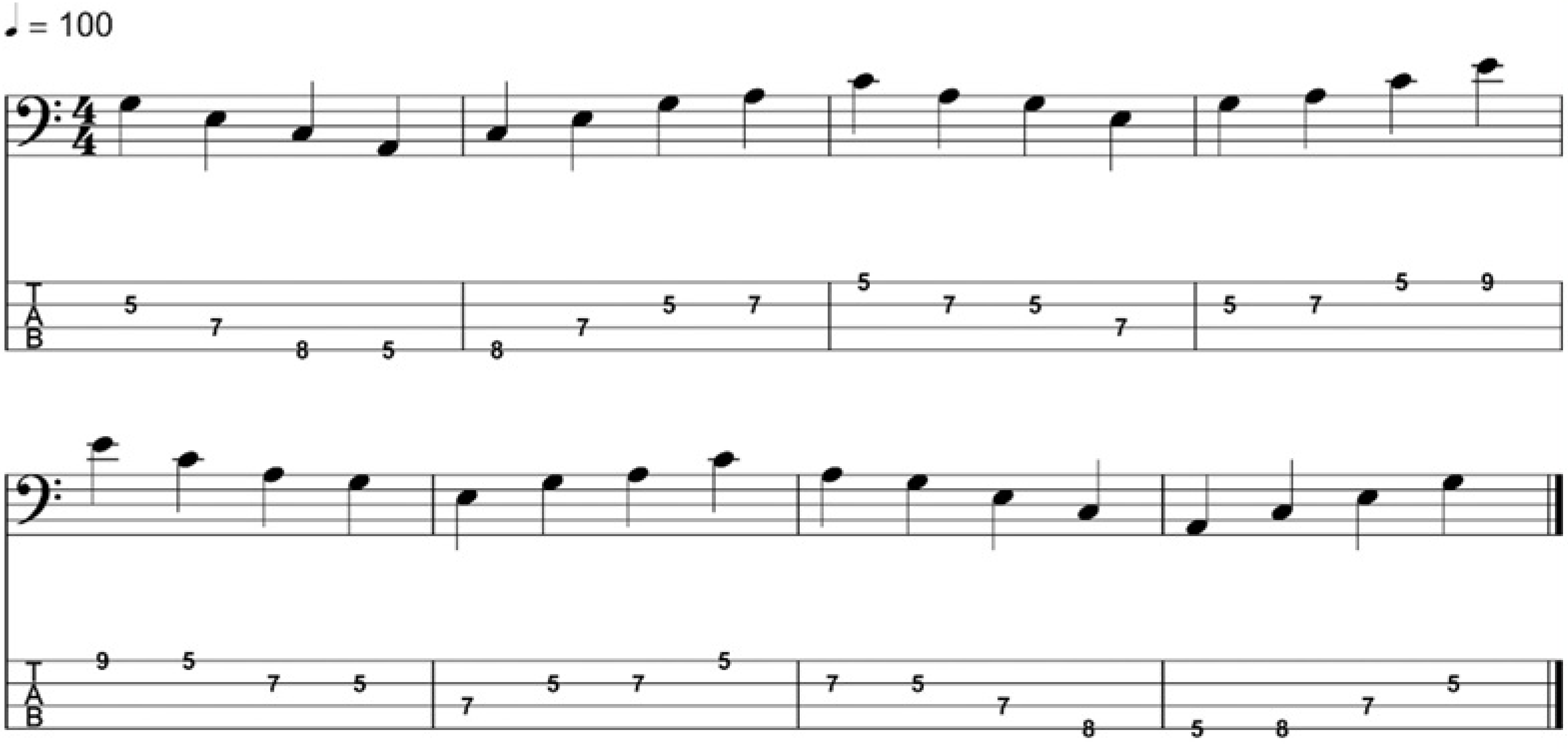
As our basses are traditionally tuned in intervals of fourths, it's common to encounter the same note, in the same register, in different fretboard positions. Exercise 4 revisits Exercise 3, delivering exactly the same notes in exactly the same order – but played perpendicular to the nut, rather than linearly.

## EXERCISE FIVE



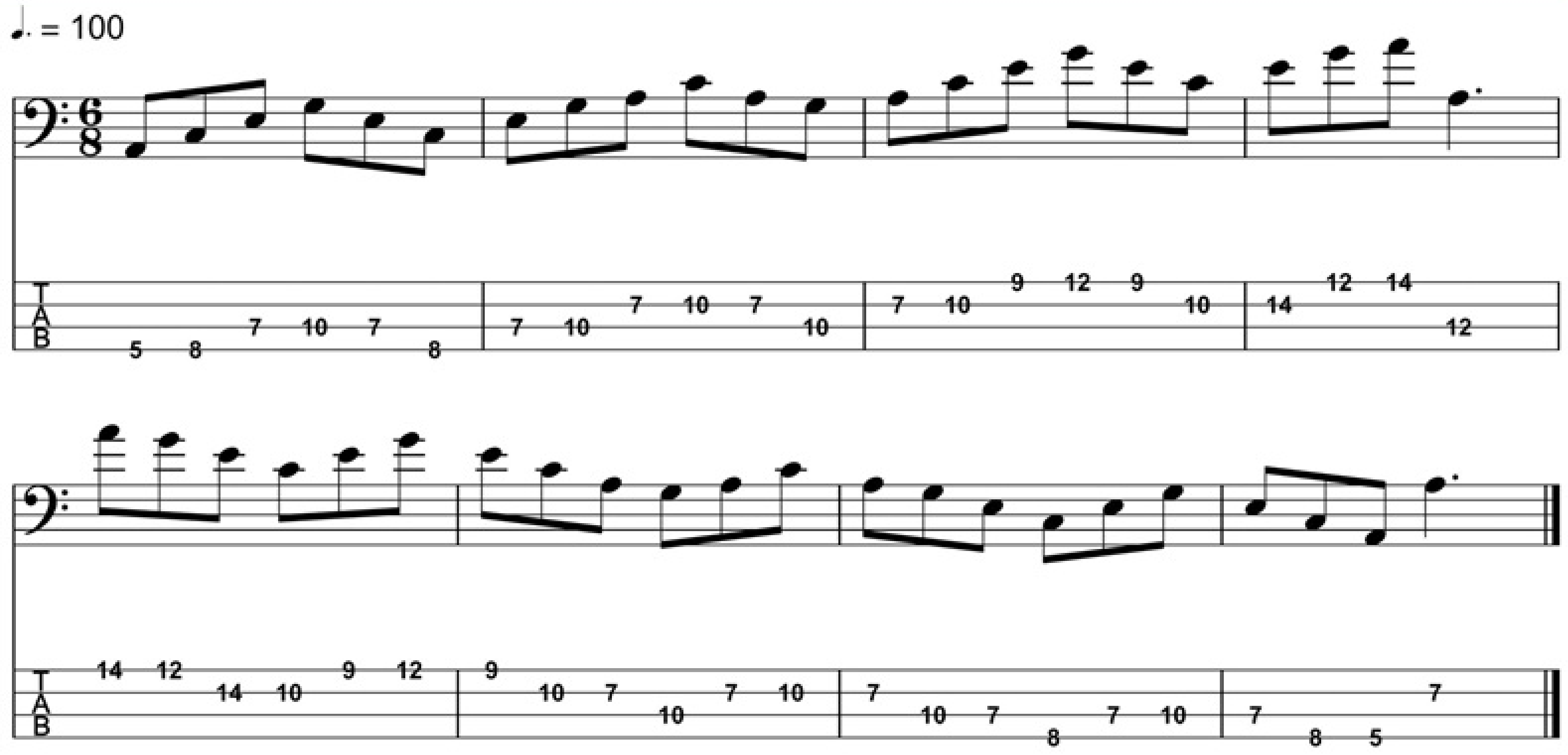

When we first encounter any form of scale or arpeggio, we usually play it in an ascending or descending format. Although this approach has a number of obvious benefits, it also conditions us to portray the vocabulary in only one manner, which can potentially prove restrictive in the long run. Let's break that mould with these exercises, which will vary your perspective of minor 7th arpeggios and their accompanying inversions.

## EXERCISE SIX



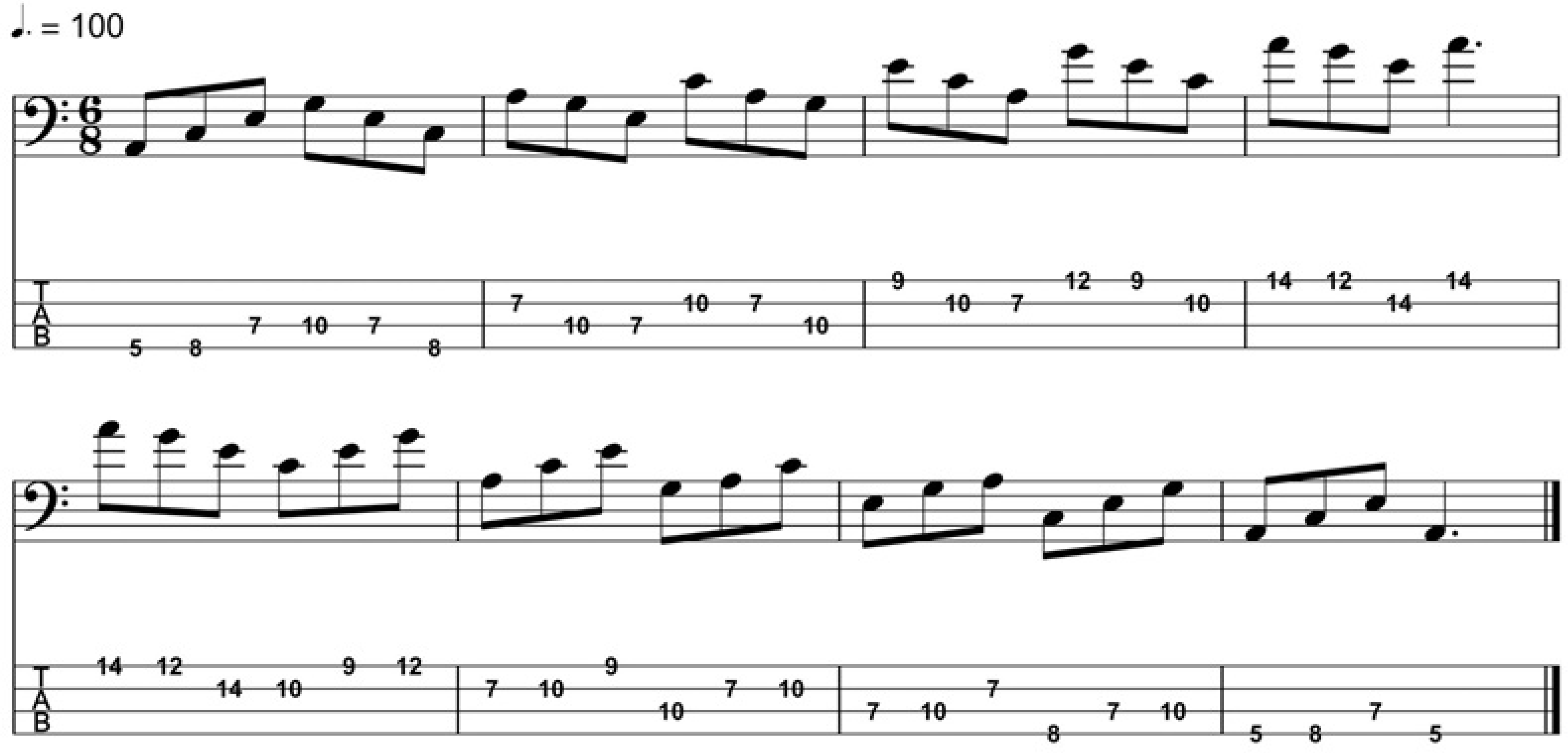

This is almost an exact facsimile of Exercise 5. We still deliver a minor 7th arpeggio in root position and its ensuing inversions, and we still play it in a perpendicular manner, but the interpretation of the inversions themselves has changed. Where you once ascended, you now descend – and where you previously descended, you now ascend.

## EXERCISE SEVEN



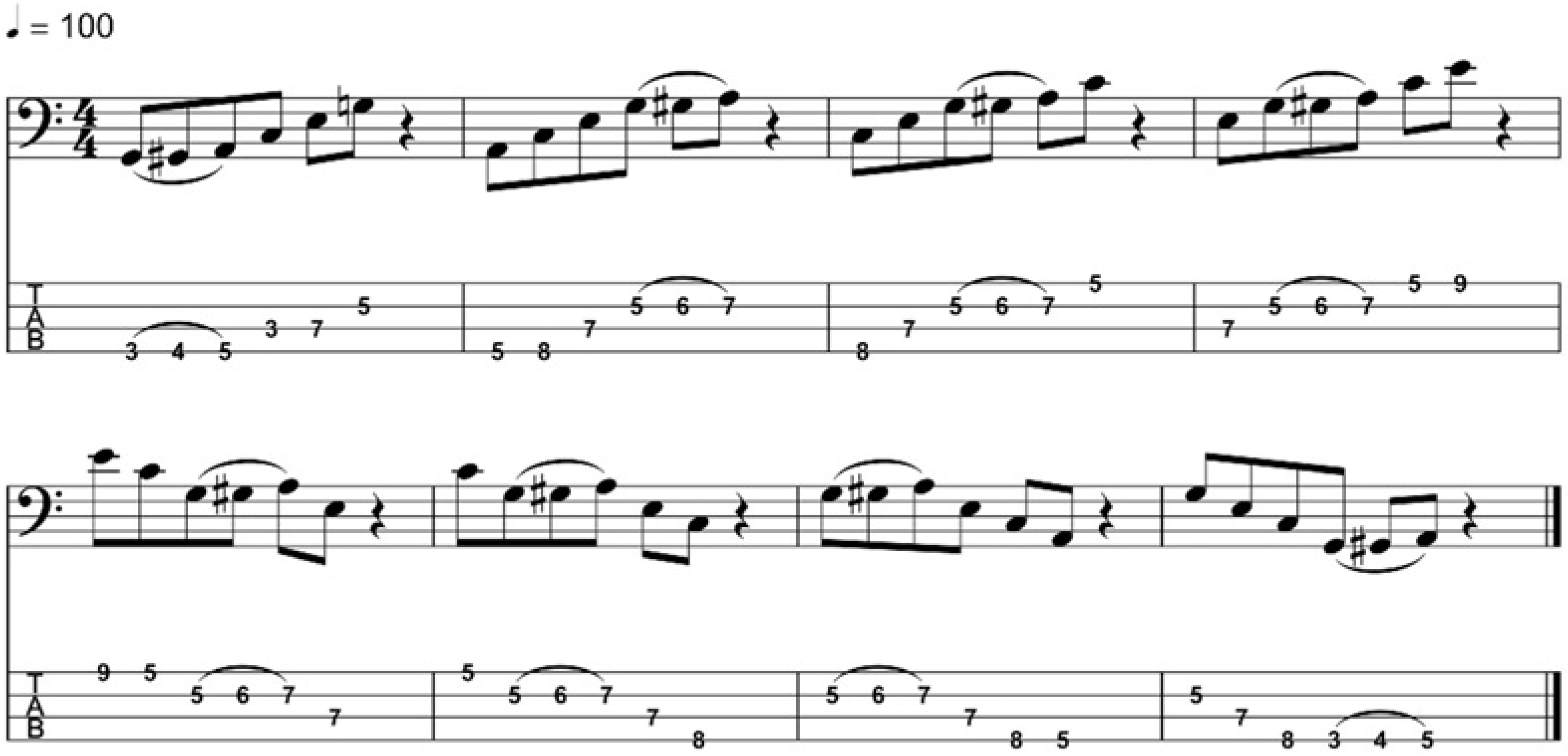

Exercise 7 utilises a sequential pattern in its portrayal of minor 7th arpeggios. It's in 6/8, which allows us to focus on groupings of three notes, but the same rudiments can easily be portrayed as triplets in 4/4. Each group of three notes moves in the same melodic direction, and starts on the chord tone above the final pitch of the previous group. Although the motif is easy to comprehend, the alternating nature of the subdivisions can easily become disorientating, so maintain concentration levels!

## EXERCISE EIGHT



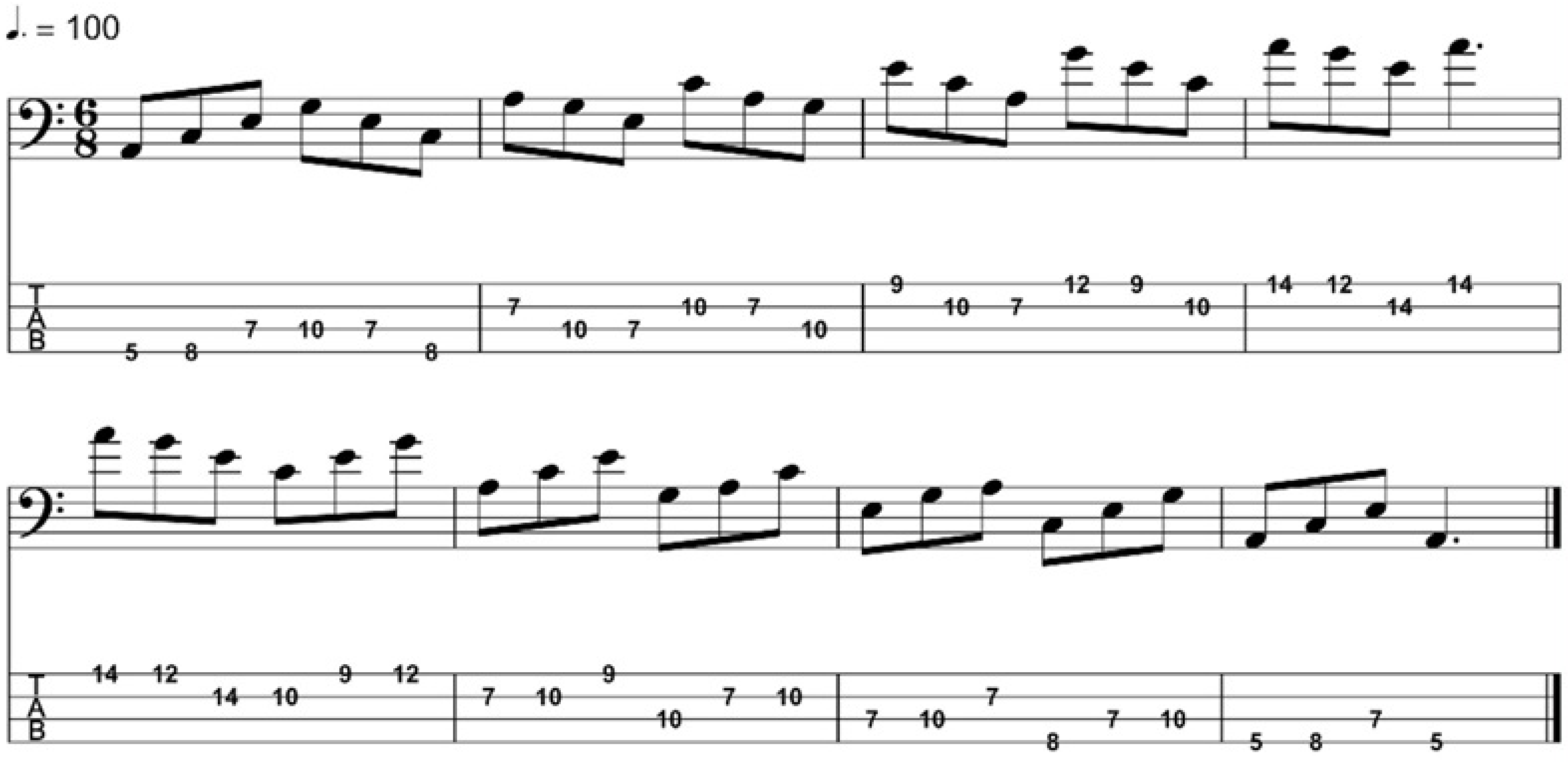

The main difference between Exercises 8 and 7 is in the way in which the groupings are conveyed. With the alternating interplay between the inversions omitted, each group is delivered in a descending manner as you ascend the fretboard, and an ascending manner as you descend. As long as you gave adequate time to our earlier linear studies, this exercise should be a matter of course, but consider your fretting hand's position throughout.

**EXERCISE NINE**



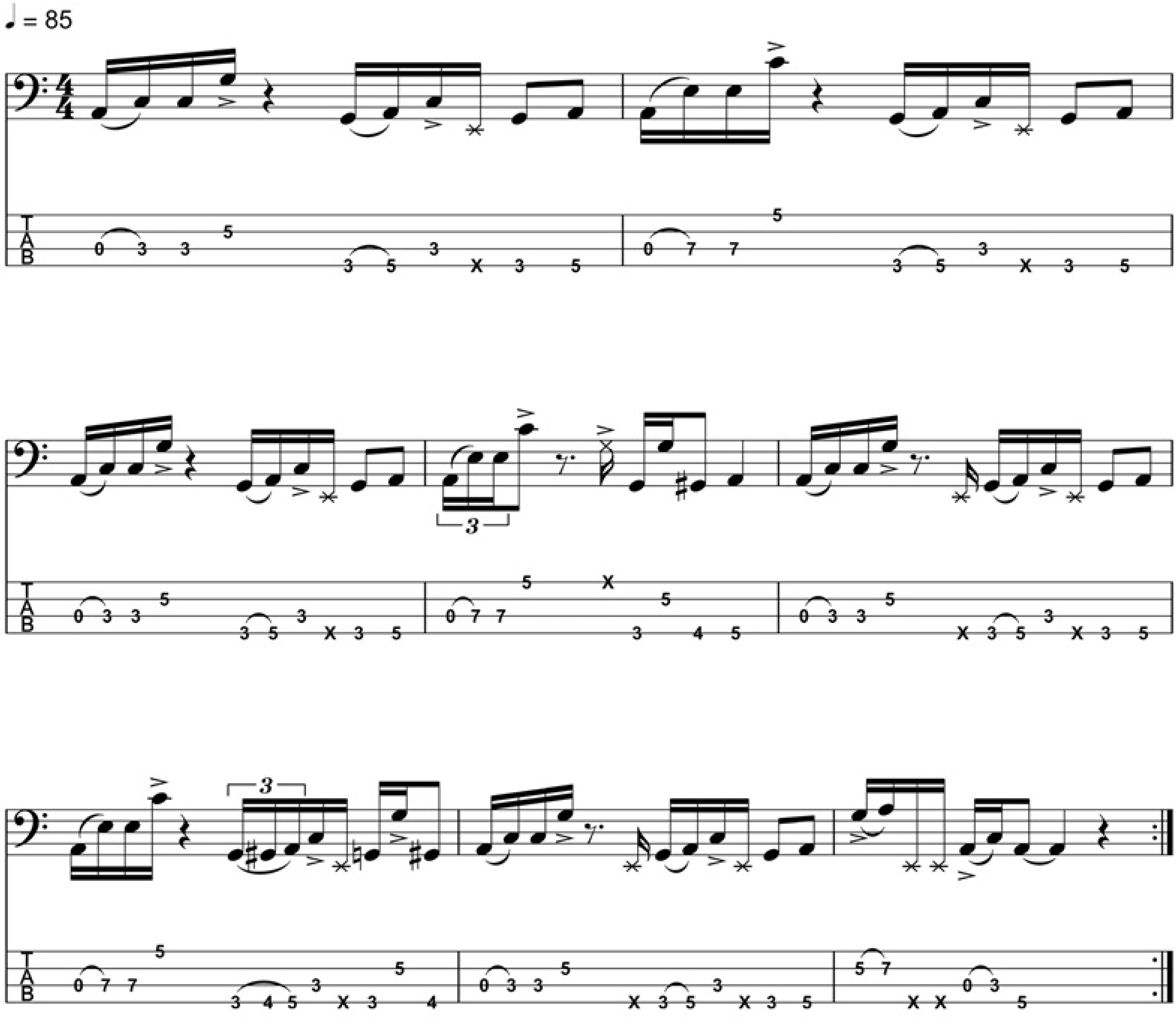

Let's look at approach notes, and more specifically, dual approach notes. These are effective within a minor 7th idiom, as chromaticism unites the ♭7th with the tonic pitch. This means that every time you encounter ascending chromaticism, it resolves to the root of the chord. Let's investigate this within each of the inversions of the minor 7th arpeggio.

**EXERCISE TEN**




This month's penultimate exercise pays homage to Joe Dart and Vulfpeck's 'The Beautiful Game'. In order to deliver the passage cleanly and at the appropriate tempo, ensure precision in your alternate picking, particularly during the opening two measures. Continuing to reference an A minor 7th arpeggio, the motif also draws influence from the dual-semitone approach-note system in the last exercise.

**EXERCISE ELEVEN**




'Open-hammer-pop' is a technique that we'll use in the opening measure of this concluding exercise. Begin by thumbing the open A string, then use the index finger of your fretting hand to hammer-on the C at fret three on string three. Then continue the line by striking the fretted C before plucking the G at fret 5 on string two. Regardless of the rhythms, this approach to the technique continues through the remainder of the exercise.

## If you only practise one thing this month...

All arpeggios are constructed from formulas, the minor 7th being no exception. As it's this formula that allows us to establish the notes of this structure, it's essential to have a strong grasp of it. Minor 7th arpeggios are constructed by stacking three intervals of thirds on top of one another in the order of minor 3rd (three frets), then major 3rd (four frets), and then another minor 3rd. If you only have time to practise one thing this month, establish a root note by selecting any pitch on your bass, then formulate a minor 7th structure above it in as many ways as possible.

Rich Brown guides us to Advanced level every month. Read on as he takes us to the very top of bass theory!

AND FINALLY...

# PENTATONIC PAIRS IN USE

In this month's lesson, I want to take a different look at the pentatonic scale and break it down in a way that might help you better understand some of the common phrases and exercises associated with this scale. Using this breakdown, we'll go through some beautiful melodic phrases and patterns that will definitely help to expand your vocabulary. So grab your bass, and let's begin!

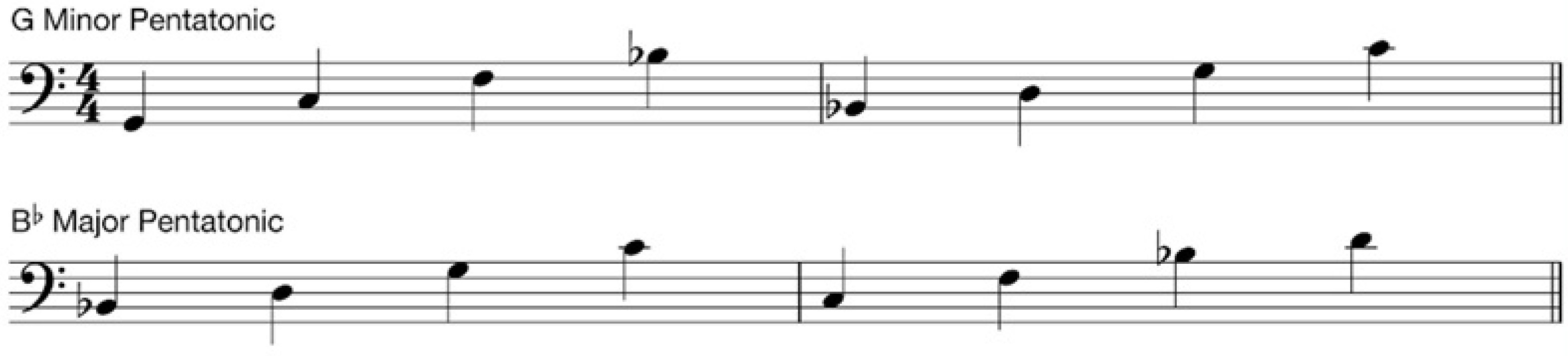
We'll focus on the G minor pentatonic scale and the B flat major pentatonic scale for this lesson. Why? Well, because they're the same scale. B♭ is the relative major of G minor. Here's a very simple way to think about this. Whenever you play a minor pentatonic scale, the relative major scale is found on the second of that minor pentatonic.

The second note of the G minor pentatonic scale is B♭. Playing the major pentatonic scale from that second note will give you the relative major.

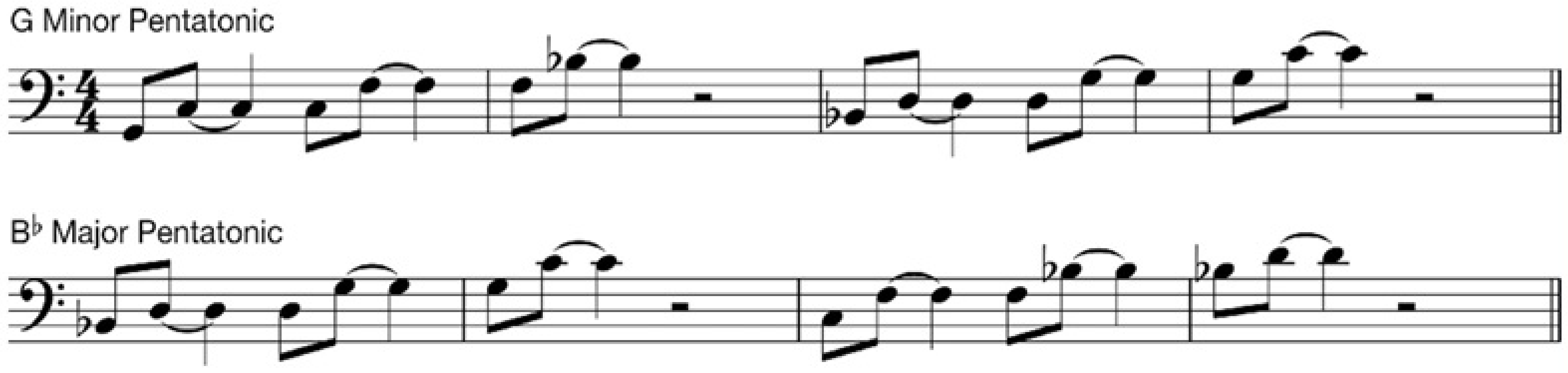
Jennie Vee of Palaye Royale on the octave

Natasha Moustache/Getty

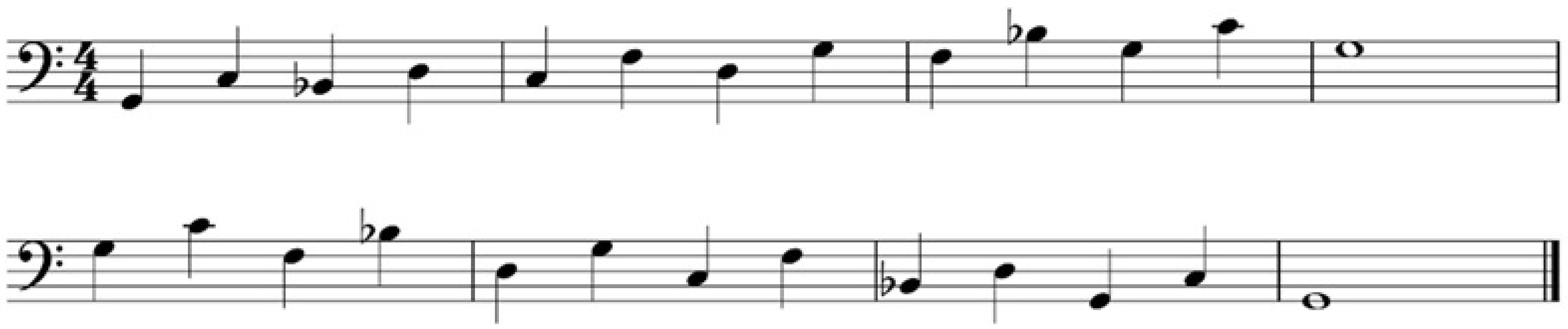
## EXERCISE ONE




## EXERCISE TWO




## EXERCISE THREE



I've talked a bit about this in a previous lesson, so I won't go into too much detail here: let's get into the breakdown. Have a look at Exercise 1.

### EXERCISE 1

These examples show a different breakdown of the major and minor pentatonic scales. Think about this as a way of dividing each scale in half: in the case of G minor pentatonic, you can think of the 4th fret as a dividing line. This line gives us four notes below the dividing line (G, C, F, and B flat on the 3rd fret) and four above the dividing line (B flat on the 6th fret, and D, G, and C on the 5th fret).

For the next step, we can look at each of these four-note groupings and break them down into three separate note pairs, as illustrated in the next exercise.

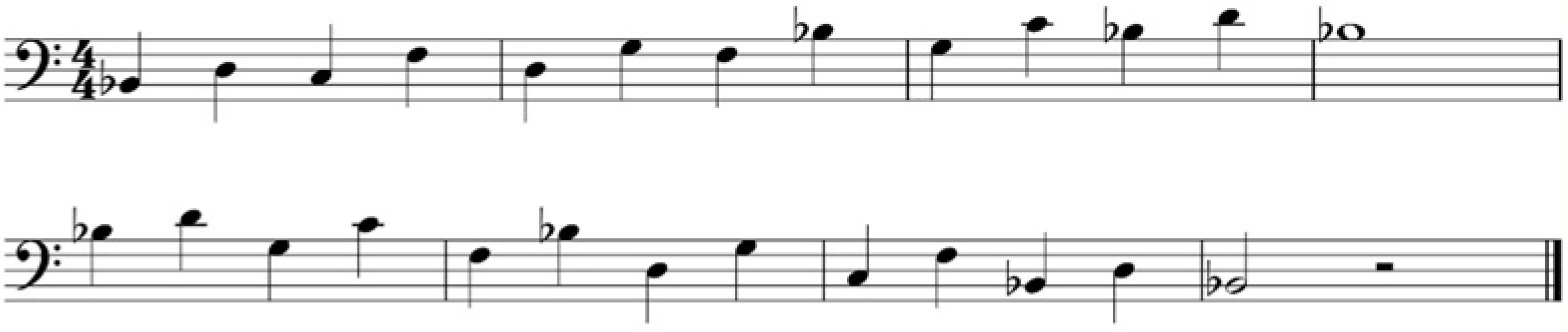
### EXERCISE 2

Each grouping contains a top pair, then a middle pair and a bottom pair. To avoid any confusion, the bottom pair of each grouping will contain the lowest notes. Now that the pairs have been established, we can put them to work.

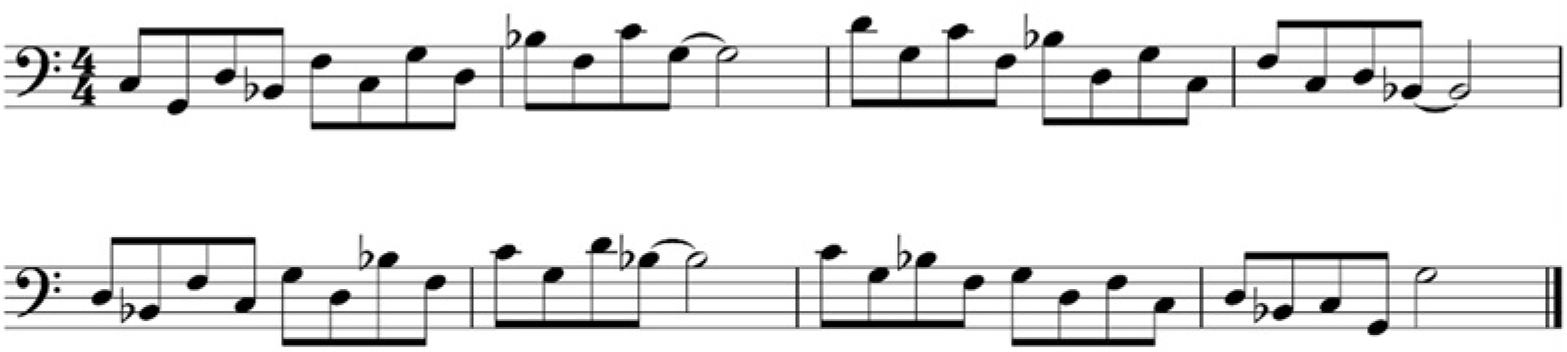
### EXERCISES 3 & 4

We can now easily surmise that each pentatonic scale contains six different note pairs in total, and if we look at Exercises 3 and 4, we can play these pairs in order, starting from each degree of the scale. This pattern might already sound

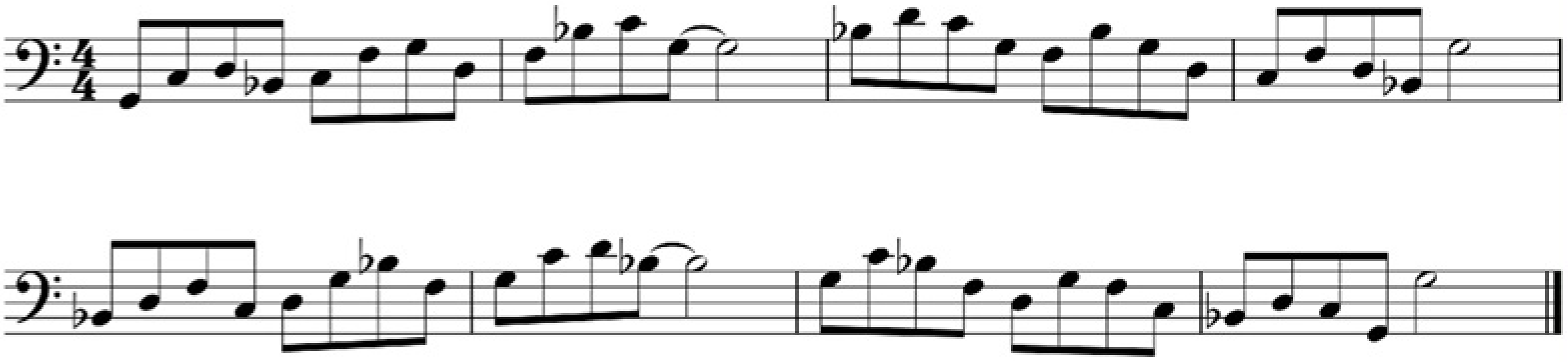
EXERCISE FOUR



EXERCISE FIVE



EXERCISE SIX



familiar to you, but I think there's something about breaking this exercise down into pairs that makes the pattern more memorable.

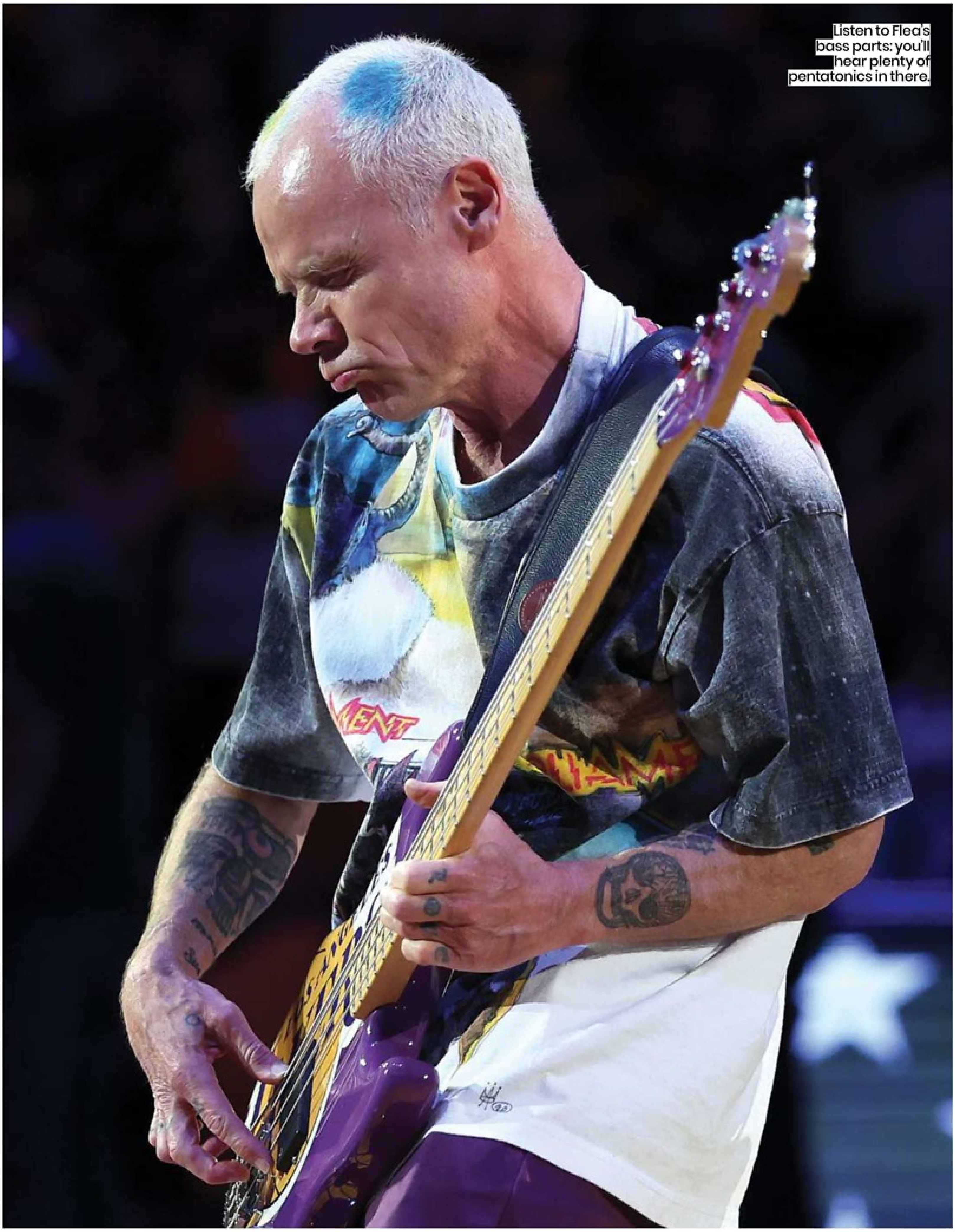
**EXERCISE 5**

The other advantage of thinking in terms of these 'pentatonic pairs' is that we can change the direction of these pairs to create different melodic patterns. For example, in Exercises 3 and 4, we played each pair ascending to create the resulting melodic pattern. In Exercise 5, each pair is played descending, but for this exercise and the exercises that follow, I will combine the two scales to create a larger exercise or melodic phrase. The objective is to become accustomed to playing these two shapes together as one 'macro-scale'.

Getting this larger shape into the muscle memory will allow you to see more of the fretboard as you improvise. Again, I've talked about this in previous lessons. Ultimately, understanding all the options available to you is essential to your creativity.

As each pair is played from high to low, you can hear a change in the characteristic tonality of the scale. To my ears, this is a beautiful melodic pattern and one I can easily integrate into my solos, bass-lines and fills. We'll discuss how to apply ideas effectively in a future lesson. For now, let's get back to our pentatonic pairs.

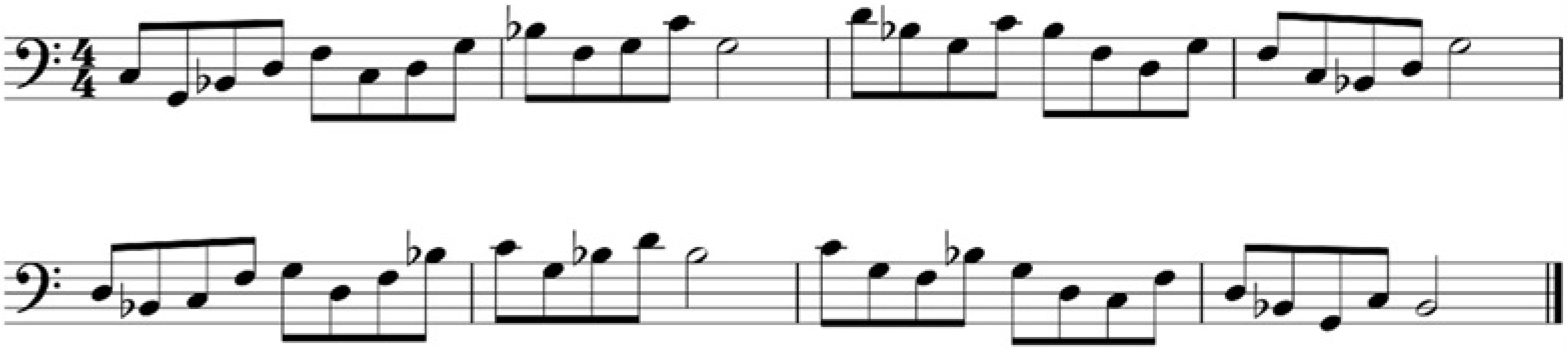
You can see how thinking of the minor and major pentatonic scales in this way allows you to see them differently. For example, you might use the pairs to come up with different sequences to explore the



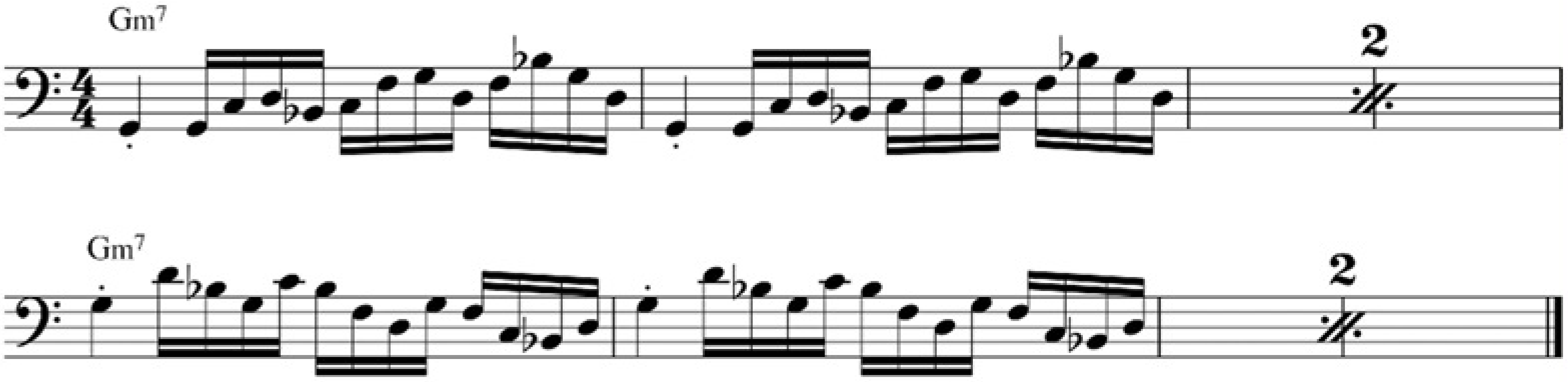
Listen to Flea's bass parts: you'll hear plenty of pentatonics in there.

© Sean M. Haffey/Getty

**EXERCISE SEVEN**



**EXERCISE EIGHT**




harmony and also the melodicism of the scales in ways you might not have thought of otherwise.

**It won't be long before your fingers instinctively reach for those ideas you've been working so hard to understand and integrate**

### EXERCISES 6 & 7

Another great example of this idea is illustrated in Exercises 6 and 7. In these two exercises, we're alternating the pairs. In Exercise 6, we're using a sequence that has us playing the first pair ascending and the second pair descending. In Exercise 7, we reverse that sequence, playing the first pair descending and the second pair ascending.

For our final exercise, I'll take what we've learned and give you a cool little bass-line to keep the music flowing. Don't let the 16th notes intimidate you: take this line at your own pace and tempo. A slower tempo might sound even better with this line.

### EXERCISES 8

Exercise 8 is based on alternating pentatonic pairs. The first four bars have an ascending-descending pattern on the G minor pentatonic scale over a Gmin harmony, while the last four bars have a descending-ascending pattern on the B♭ major pentatonic scale. However, the pattern is still played over a G minor harmony.

Do take note of how the B♭ pentatonic pattern sounds over the Gmin harmony. In doing so, you'll become more accustomed to using this area of the fretboard when playing over Gmin, thus expanding your range and giving you more options when playing.

Once these exercises become familiar to you and you can feel them being integrated into your muscle memory, I suggest you try playing these exercises in all keys. Practising this way will give you a better sense of how these two scales – the minor pentatonic and its relative major – will sound and feel when played together. These fretboard connections can make all the difference when improvising.

Sometimes, seeing what is available to you as an alternative doesn't connect musically. In other words, if I tell you B♭ is the relative major of G minor, it might make sense to you theoretically – but making music out of those connections in real time might prove challenging.

These exercises allow you to make those connections. Not only are you able to see and hear how the connections are made, but it won't be long before your fingers instinctively reach for those ideas you've been working so hard to understand and integrate. That's when you're really making music in your own way. That's when you begin to find your voice on the instrument.

Enjoy, my friends. Make music. Have fun.

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# AMPEG B-15 PORTAFLEX

## Say hello to this esteemed vintage bass amplifier, now in its seventh decade

Dan Veall is a session and stage bass player, educator and gear expert and is here to answer your questions. Contact: @DanVeallBassist

This amp, one of the true greats in the world of bass amplification, was designed by Ampeg's Jess Oliver back in 1958, but it wasn't until 1960 that it was introduced. The B-15 Portaflex, or 'Portable Reflex Baffle Bass System' as it was originally known, seemed both illogical and ingenious at the same time, as the amplifier head was stored inside the cabinet for transportation. Four latches allowed the top of the B-15 speaker cabinet to be lifted off. With the amplifier secured to it with bolts, the whole assembly could be flipped over and dropped inside the cabinet, providing ample protection for its delicate valves while in transit. Thus the B-15 was christened the 'fliptop'.

**Who used the B-15 Portaflex?**
James Jamerson used one, as did Donald 'Duck' Dunn, Verdine White, John Paul Jones, Bob Glaub, Bob Babbitt, Marcus Miller and many other bass stars, as it was a staple in recording studios throughout the Sixties. The B-15 amplifier itself is a 30-watt valve amp, of which there have been a few different revisions over the years: the sought-after 1964 and 1966 models were combined in Ampeg's Heritage reissue unit a while back.

**Should we all use this amp?**
Well, some bassists say that the B-15 has a 'tubby' tone – and the '66, although it's much brighter than the '64, doesn't carry a huge amount of a bottom end through its single 15" speaker. By today's standards, this 30-watt setup is a bit timid compared to the 800 watts-plus hard-hitters that power Ampeg's own 'fridge' amp, the 810E. The little amp's catches and cabinet fixtures often rattled while in use, too, so the B-15 might not be the amplifier you'd want to throw around on a tour stage, if you could even hear it over the other musicians, of course. Not only that, it doesn't have any of the features you'll see on a modern amplifier. You will not be installing Impulse Responses and digital effects on this unit, and you will not use it without a speaker cabinet or load attached – as valves don't like that – and you will certainly not be slipping it into your bass gigbag like a Trace Elliot Elf head.

Jim Steinfeldt/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty

**That's a whole lot of reasons not to use a B-15, buddy.**
Sure – but on the upside, you're going to be graced with a glorious tone, full of richness and the sensitivity that only passive pickups, valves, transformers, and speakers can offer. The B-15 graced all the famous studios, where incredible classic albums and film scores were recorded, so there are plenty of thudding Motown tones or Carol Kaye-style pick sounds in there. It even sounds like the main theme from the film *Bullitt*, which doesn't get cooler.

**Is this thing expensive?**
Older models can be, but if your pockets aren't deep enough for an original vintage B-15, Ampeg still produces fliptop amps under the Portaflex name, from a super-cute 20-watt valve head to an 800-watt D-Class powerhouse. Each of these is capable of being housed inside its own cabinet, with 10", 12" or 15" speaker configurations. In addition, the revered B-15 sound has been digitally profiled and emulated in many top-tier processors. So try one out if you can!

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